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THE Knights of the Red Cross:

OR,
The Magician of Granada.

A TALE OF THE ALHAMBRA.

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LAW," "HILL, THE HUNCHBACK," "HYDRABAD,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE RED CROSS AND THE SLEEPING LEOPARD.

A CAVALIER, mounted on a superb Andalusian horse, slowly ascended the steep and rugged side of one of the many hills or mountains commanding a view of Granada. The Alhambra had not yet fallen, and the warlike and rapacious Moor still retained a foothold in Spain. When the horseman reached the summit of the hill, the beams of the sinking sun lay like wefts of gold on turret and tower, stretching along the plains below, and gilding the peaks of the Sierra as far as the eye could see. He contemplated, from his lofty height, the ancient and renowned palace of the Moorish kings with wonder and admiration.

It was some time before he recovered from the trance of surprise produced by the sudden revelation of a scene so grand, romantic and magnificent.

The cavalier, incased in steel, armed with lance and sword, bearing his shield upon his arm, and

sitting firmly and gracefully his noble steed, was an object not unworthy the bright glances of dame and damsel, and lady-love. He was not indebted for his manly prestige to the richness of his knightly harness, which was plain and massive rather than fretted with ornament and art, but to the commanding proportions and symmetry of his person. Both shield and helmet bore marks of recent encounters with enemies or daring trials of knightly prowess. He wore over his armor a surcoat or tabard of simple cloth, on the left shoulder of which a red cross was inwrought, and the same sacred symbol appeared on the backs of his heavy gauntlets.

His open visor revealed a countenance neither Spanish nor Moorish, but English, in its unmistakable signs of nationality. It was a brave and handsome face, though somewhat troubled in expression, and pale, probably from travel and fatigue.

While he was gazing at the Alhambra with the interest which the scene was calculated to inspire, a figure emerged from some clustering vines at his left, and stood waiting, manifestly, to be noticed. It was a swarthy youth, about seventeen years of age, clad in the garb of the Moorish peasantry. After waiting patiently some moments without being discovered, with his foot he spun a loose stone down the declivity of the mountain.

The knight grasped the pommel of his sword and turned sharply toward the youth; but, perceiving he had nothing to apprehend, relinquished his hold upon the weapon, and asked with some sternness:

"What seek you, sirrah?"

"Nothing that I have not found; and that, I doubt not, is more than you can say," answered the youth, unabashed by the haughty air of the Christian knight.

"Speak not too pertly, young infidel, or perchance

you may get a taste of the handle of my lance; for, though I may not turn its point against one of your degree, knightly usage does not hinder me from giving you a sturdy whack or two across the shoulders," returned the cavalier.

"Knightly usage I care little about; and, as for the blows, you may take all yourself, and welcome; and if I am any judge of such matters, you have received more than a dozen lusty thwacks since you came to the mountains, and are likely to get as many more before you get out of them," said the Moor, in an unconcerned and easy manner.

"You are a saucy varlet," said he of the Red Cross, "but not wanting in quickness. What is your name, young whelp of Islam?"

"Ahab," responded the youth, carelessly. "Ahab, at your highness' service; sometimes dubbed Ahab the Witty."

"If you are witty, God save the dull ones! But witty or not, your service I will cheerfully accept, if you will guide me to yonder palace of the Moorish king."

"I could guide your godship there, but a hundred Ahabs, be they never so witty, would not have wit enough to bring you away alive. The heads of Franks are very much wanted at Granada just now."

"Mind not my danger, young Ahab, and play me no false tricks; for be it known to you, in confidence, that I have knocked two treacherous guides on the head this very day. I cracked their skulls as though they had been eggshells."

"I'll take care that you crack not mine; for if my wit fail me, my heels will not. However, to speak you fairly, my Christian guide-slayer, it is farther to yonder palace than you wot of; for see you not that a valley, deep and intricate, lies between you and it, while



WITH A MUTTERED CURSE THE OLD MAN DROVE IT INTO HAMET'S BOSOM.

neither you nor your fine steed are in condition to travel so far. Yet, if you insist, I will run before you like a staghound, till some gallant Moorish knight meets and serves you as you served those same unlucky guides.

"Give me as little of your wit as may be, and as much of your legs as possible; for, to tell the truth, I think the last better than the first, and more likely to do you good service."

"Come on, your godship," said Ahab, turning his back to the knight, and taking a bridle-path leading down the mountain.

"Hark'e, youth! If you mislead me, it will be at your peril, for neither your nimble wit nor your nimble legs will save you. I am the bearer of important dispatches from King Ferdinand to Muley Aben Hassan, King of Granada, and in this business I will brook no trifling."

"Fear not! I will guide you, in the name of the Prophet. Or, stay; perhaps it would be better to give me those dispatches, and let me run on with them, while you turn loose your horse, and amuse yourself with a night's lodging on the ground, thinking of the eyes of your lady-love. It is said to be mighty fine pastime to wander about among the rocks and howl verses in the praise of some adorable she."

"If I do not drub thee before we part, it will be for no lack of provocation," replied the knight, his grave lips parting in a slight smile.

"If you would allow me to be so bold, you come not with such state as is the fashion of ambassadors to the grim old King?" said the presuming Ahab.

"A most wise and sagacious conclusion! Know then, Ahab the Witty, that I have been attacked in the mountains, my retinue dispersed, and the real Ambassador, my companion-in-arms, Don Juan de Vera, mortally wounded."

"In consequence of which," added Ahab, with easy impudence, "you took his dispatches and kept on, thinking to discharge your duty like a true knight, and enter Granada at every risk."

"Now, by St. Jago, thou art over bold! Yet I should heed not the wagging of such a tongue as thine."

The knight relapsed into silence, and Ahab trotted before him with agile steps.

The sun declined from sight, and the mountains and the vega below lay pale in mist and shadow. He was threading his way as fast as his weary steed could travel, when Ahab made a sudden stop. On looking for the cause of this interruption, he beheld, sitting statue-like upon a richly-caparisoned horse, a knight of the most imposing and goodly appearance. His steel armor gleamed in the darkness like the shimmering rays of the moon. The hilt of his sword flashed with diamonds and precious stones. A surcoat of golden cloth drooped from his shoulders, sweeping in glittering folds to the horse's back and flanks. This garment, like his sword, was bestudded with diamonds and pearls of great size and beauty. On the left shoulder of this emblazoned surcoat was a black crescent, which, wrought on a ground of gold, produced an effect alike graceful and striking, while on his embossed shield was the figure of a sleeping leopard. On account of the darkness, the Knight of the Red Cross could not read the line that was inscribed beneath the significant device.

The cavalier's visor was closed, and he had no opportunity of seeing the features of one whose prestige was so knightly and resplendent. The magnificence of his appointments was not limited to his person, but extended to the bardings of his horse and to the bridle, which was fretted with gems, setting off the noble animal as a crown graces the head of a beautiful woman. His long lance, which was in keeping with his rare seeming, was laid in rest, and he observed the approach of the stranger-knight with courtly composure. Never was there more gallant sight for the eye of dame or mistress.

Reining up his steed, he of the Red Cross demanded his name and purpose.

"The first," answered the cavalier, courteously, "I may not give; but the second, I willingly answer. I see in you, Sir Knight, an enemy of my faith and country. I trust we meet as brave men should, unless you can show good cause for foregoing the pleasure of breaking a lance and trying the temper of Moorish steel."

"Chivalry forbid that I should forego so fair an opportunity!" replied the other. "I thank you heartily for the honor you offer me. I will also be more communicative than yourself. I am an English knight in the service of Spain. I am called Raoul Mornay, and am on my way to Granada to seek audience with the King, having important matters to lay before him. The reason why you see me without proper state and attendance is, that we fell into an ambushade on the road, and so roughly handled by overpowering numbers, that I only of the whole retinue was able to escape and pursue the enterprise. I have no right to lay my lance in rest for mine own honor and glory, till my business is dispatched with Muley Aben Hassan, King of Granada. That duty discharged, I will meet you right joyfully, for the sake of ladies fair and the honor of such an encounter."

"Your courtesy, Sir Raoul, I take in good part; and to show you that I am not ignorant of knightly usage, I will conduct you to a place of rest and shelter, where you may refresh yourself and steed till morning, when you shall go on your way with safe attendance, with the compact to meet me at such time and place as shall be agreed upon, to try our mutual prowess in mortal combat," answered the Moor, with dignity.

"Courtly infidel, your magnanimity pleases me! I accept your conditions, and will accompany you wherever it may be your pleasure, satisfied that a cavalier so courtly in speech and so brave in attire will fulfill to the letter his promises."

Sir Raoul Mornay bowed till the dark plume in his helmet nearly touched the neck of his steed, which courtesy was returned by the Moorish knight by a slight inclination of the body.

"This matter being settled, we will speak of it no more for the present. Follow me."

The Knight of the Sleeping Leopard touched his horse gently with his heel, and, turning, struck off in the direction contrary to that which Sir Raoul had been pursuing. The latter followed him across an irregular ravine, and finally ascended a lofty spur of the Alpuxarras—a chain of mountains abounding with castles and watch-towers, often the resort of outlaws and predatory bands of lawless adventurers. After a slow and difficult ascent, attended with much winding and some danger, they reached the summit, which stretched out in a plateau of some extent, in the centre of which Sir Raoul beheld the weather-beaten walls of an ancient edifice, which served not only the purpose of a fortress, but as a place of habitation.

Ahab, who had continued to run before the cavaliers, ran and blew a horn that was suspended to the wall surrounding the tower, when a heavy gate was opened, and the Moorish knight entered the court, closely followed by Sir Raoul. The gate was then closed, and secured by a bolt and chain. Dismounting, their horses were given in charge of grooms.

"This," said the Moor, pointing to the castle (for castle it seemed), "is called the Vermilion Tower. I cannot give you the entertainment befitting a knight of your valor, but such as I can command I most willingly place at your disposal. While you remain here, consider this poor castle your own."

An aged servitor opened the cumbersome door of the tower, which grated dismally on its hinges, and admitted the Knight of the Leopard and his chivalrous foeman, who paused on the trodden threshold, and said:

"One warning, Sir Raoul Mornay, I must give you. You will see in this castle a maiden fairer than the lily and sweeter than the rose. Let not your eyes be dazzled, nor your heart captivated. She is not of your faith. Seek her not. Address her in all knightly courtesy; but let your thoughts play upon you no romantic tricks, nor your imagination indulge in impossible dreams."

"Proud infidel," answered Sir Raoul, somewhat piqued, "I am an English knight and a loyal gentleman! I have looked often upon fair ladies. I have seen the beauties of England, the warm-hearted damsels of Spain, the starry-eyed daughters of the Moslem, and my heart is yet free. I have broken many a stout ashen lance for love of the sex, but never one for any single name. The divinity is yet to be seen that has power to vanquish the heart of Raoul Mornay. Fear not, haughty son of Islam, that I shall forget what is due to worthy foe and lady fair."

"Trust not too much to thine own invulnerability," answered the Moor. "A breastplate of steel cannot always resist the soft glances of gentle-eyed girls. Mounted on thy good steed, I doubt not thou wouldst do thy devoir to the admiration of all beholders; but in lady's bower, wounds are given that no leech can heal."

They were now in an ante-room, the walls of which were hung with shields and Moorish swords and cimeters curiously wrought. Beside these were many other devices calculated to remind one of the field and the fray. By the light of a brazen lamp, Sir Raoul was enabled to see the features of his courtly host, for he had taken off his helmet on entering the tower. His face was youthful in appearance, imperious in its expression, yet handsome. Light chestnut hair hung in curling love-locks about his cheeks and neck. His lips were firm, and manifestly more wont to exact obedience than to render it.

The interest of the English knight in his chivalric enemy momentarily increased; his enemy, because the armies of Ferdinand were already afield, and the stern old King of Granada had struck the first blow by the destruction of a town and the seizure of a fortress. He was impressed with the deference with which a servitor approached to disencumber him of his armor, and the grace with which, by a slight gesture, he signified that his guest should be first lightened of the weight of steel in which he was incased.

Relieved of this burden, he was ushered by his entertainer into another apartment, where there were such a number and variety of garments, and so rich withal, that Sir Raoul's curiosity was still more strongly appealed to.

"Do me the honor, brave Frank, to choose from my poor wardrobe such apparel as may serve your needs while at the Vermilion Tower," said the Knight of the Sleeping Leopard.

"It would be churlish, noble Sir, to refuse anything from one whom, I am sure, is as brave in the tented field as he is hospitable in his castle," replied Mornay.

The Moor smiled; a smile so sweet and sad that it could not but attract the notice of the knight.

"I am certain, Christian cavalier, that if your hand be equal to your speech, I shall be vanquished."

He paused and sighed heavily.

"You see nothing here," he added; "all is gone. Judge not my condition by these surroundings. The time has been"—he stopped again—"but it is folly to speak of that which has departed. You see before you one without name or prestige. This castle is scarcely habitable for any but soldiers; but the one of whom I have spoken is compelled by circumstances to accept any refuge, however undesirable. You well know the customs of the Moors in regard to their women; but as much from necessity as from a desire to do you courtesy, I deviate somewhat from the usages of our people. Follow me."

To say that Mornay was not affected by this discourse, would not be truth. He followed his conductor, his thoughts about equally divided between curiosity and incredulity. Traversing a cheerless hall, they ascended to the upper part of the tower. Mornay was ushered into an apartment in which there were striking evidences of luxury and taste, in singular contrast with the sternness and grimness of the place. It was lighted by a silver lamp, that emitted a pleasant perfume as it burned. In this bower, as the knight anticipated, was seated a lady, whose wonderful perfections of form and feature instantly made him forgetful of every other object.

The Moor stood a moment in silence, as if to enjoy his surprise and confusion.

"This," he said, presently, "is the lady I spoke of." Turning toward her, he added: "Leoline, this is an English knight, who, for a few hours, will be our guest. Pardon me for bringing him hither unannounced. He is brave, and, like every true knight, the slave of your sex."

By this time, the Moorish maiden had arisen, evidently not ill pleased with the liberty which had been taken; her attitude was both haughty and graceful. So overpowering was her beauty, that Mornay remained mute and motionless, without the power to summon immediately to his aid those gallant words which never before failed to come at his wish.

The Moor stepped quickly to her side, took

her hand respectfully and tenderly, and said, in a sad soothing voice:

"Nay, sweet sister, be not vexed! These Franks think it not unseemly to see maidens unveiled, and it is the custom of their country to meet fair ladies at all places."

Then to Sir Raoul, who was beginning to collect his senses:

"Sir Knight, is it not true that you do not cage your women?"

"It is most true," replied Mornay, bowing; and my astonishment did not arise from the mere novelty of seeing one of your sex, but from another cause, which I dare not name. Permit me, fair lady, if my presence be unwelcome, to make my profoundest obeisance and withdraw."

"A guest brought by my brother ought not to be unwelcome," she answered, in a voice that was the soul of music, and thrilled him like the spell of an Eastern enchantress. "The manners of your country shall be respected by me, for I have heard that your ladies are highly privileged as well as fair!"

She resumed her seat with inimitable grace; while Mornay, true to the principles of chivalry, which inculcated, among its first and most essential elements, devotion to woman, remained standing, with an air of respect as deep and apparent as if rendered to a crowned queen.

Leoline pointed to a seat, and Mornay, again bowing, accepted it.

"I have done the English knight this grace," said the Moor, "because he has honored me with his knightly word to try the strength of ashen lance and Moorish blade as soon as he shall have transacted certain business at the Alhambra, and returned again to this tower."

The rose-tinted cheeks of Leoline grew pale.

"Dear brother, what need? what need?" she said, quickly. "If he be brave and courteous, meet as friends and brothers, and not as foes. I have lost all but you. On what arm could I lean should you fall?"

"Lady," interposed Mornay, "distress not yourself on his account. If Providence gives me the victory, I beg to assure you that—"

"No more, no more!" cried he of the Leopard. "I shall take it ill if you complete that sentence; for I should hold myself disgraced, if I undertook the combat with a pledge of safety in my ears. I want no passport to immunity from personal danger. I can keep me with my lance and good sword. Believe not that the mistaken fear of my sister can in the least affect my compact. Know, proud Christian, that Abdallah, the Moor, is not ignorant of the usages of knight-errantry; and that while courteous to a foe, he foregoes no plighted word or previous engagement."

Mornay glanced at Leoline. The pallidness of her face had given place to a vermillion flush. Her humid eyes, large and eloquent, beamed with tenderness; they looked from beneath the exquisite lashes like twin-stars gazing from Heaven. Her lips, her chin, with its dimples, her snowy teeth, her angelic expression; her brow, inimitably arched, whiter and clearer than alabaster; her round and drooping shoulders; her arms, her bewitching hands, the divine symmetry of her shape; and, in brief, her whole person, was so perfect in its parts, so transcendent in its loveliness, that the Knight of the Red Cross became unconscious of himself, his pride, his aspirations, and lived, for the moment, only in her. Ardently he longed for an opportunity to show his devotion to such a creature. He would have deemed it no desecration, no affront to God, to kneel at her feet as at a shrine, and reverently kiss the little foot that peeped from beneath her soft and fleecy drapery—drapery that enwrapped a form that seemed too celestial for earth. All his dreams of dame, and damsel, and lady-love were immeasurably surpassed by this living and present reality. He breathed hard; he continually changed color; he moved uneasily upon his seat; he stole covert glances at her ineffable eyes, and experienced such a tumult within that he had difficulty in concealing his emotions.

The Moor, he thought, observed his trepidations, and he was sure a frown rested upon his brow.

Leoline, at first, with maiden timidity, did not raise her eyes to his face, but by-and-by began to regard him more particularly. Raoul Mornay, being gifted by nature, was not of a cast to offend the gaze of woman, though she were ever so fastidious in her

ideas of manly endowments. Forgetting the novelty of her position, she began to converse as freely as her educational prejudices would permit, but with an indescribable air of dignity and condescension that not only surprised him, but enhanced the witchery of her presence. When, anon, she rose to withdraw, Mornay had no heart of his own!

CHAPTER II.

ABADDON.

Raoul Mornay was conducted to one of the turrets of the tower by the Moorish knight. The apartment in which he found himself had been occupied in times of danger by men-at-arms. Many evidences of the uses of the place still remained.

"It is a rough lodging that I offer you," said Abdallah, "and falls far short of your merits. Yonder couch you may perchance find hard, but of late I have slept soundly on worse. Should you need attendance, strike the bell hanging near that embrasure, with the martel that lies near it."

"I have often cast myself upon the ground in my armor, and slept soundly," replied Mornay. "I have long inured myself to hardship, and can, without complaint, forego the luxuries of life."

Abdallah lighted a lamp, and was withdrawing, but paused at the door, and looking searchingly at the Knight of the Red Cross, asked:

"What think you, Sir Raoul, of my sister?"

The knight's face flushed to his brow.

"That she outshines every star of beauty that it has been my fortune to see!" he answered, with more earnestness, than he intended. "By this sacred cross," he touched the handle of his sword, "I affirm, and will make good good the affirmation on foot or on horseback, that she is the fairest creature that man ever looked on! This I dare assert, and will maintain."

"Your views have changed in a manner little short of miraculous! I should be wanting in candor if I did not warn you to keep your thoughts from playing truant with your judgment. She is a pearl not to be had for the asking, nor to be won by one of common degree. Her faith is not thine; and thou wilt not soon become an apostate!"

The Knight of the Leopard pronounced these words in a fashion observably dignified and earnest, then with a stately parting salutation, passed from the turret, leaving Mornay in an eddy of doubt, love, and wonder. Instead of divesting himself of apparel, and courting the pillow and sleep, he paced the watch-tower with nervous trepidation, thinking of the superb vision that had dawned like a sun upon his senses. Her heavenly eyes, her darkly-arched brows, her peerless mouth, her matchless figure, her unapproachable grace, faithfully remembered, filled him with emotions impossible to describe. He forgot the history of her people; he forgot the dark Prophet; he forgot the reproach that rested on the vengeful Moslem; he forgot his mission; he forgot the conquering banners of Spain, and was conscious of Leoline only. Her name was softest music, her recalled idea both delight and torture. For the first time in his life, he felt the conquering power of woman, and as he paced to and fro, renewed his vows of fealty to the sweet sex. So lost was he in absorbing meditations, that he scarcely noticed the entrance of Ahab the Witty, bearing a tray laden with refreshments. It was not till the Moorish youth addressed him that he deigned to pause and give him attention.

"Food and wine for the Frank," said Ahab. "May his godship enjoy it to the satisfaction of his stomach and the joy of his palate."

"Thou here?" said Mornay.

"Why not?" quoth Ahab, coolly, placing the tray on a table. "I am not scarce anywhere. Nobody marvels at seeing me. My wit and my legs find me strange companionship. I am at present thy serving-man."

"A thing I did not know of," replied Sir Raoul, dryly. "Be good enough to inform me, Ahab, who made thee my servant?"

"Who should it be but myself?" returned the youth. "I have taken upon me that office; and by the aid of the Prophet and other invisible gods, I mean to discharge the trust with all acceptance."

"They have strange ways of doing things, methinks, within the bounds of Granada."

"Some persons," returned Ahab, "do as

they like, and some do not; but it is all the same!"

"You are of the first, I suppose?" answered Mornay.

"Your godship is right! And belonging to that favored class, I can say things with immense confidence. I shall serve you very faithfully, always being ready to consult my pleasure first and yours afterward."

Ahab arranged the contents of the tray without once condescending to notice his new master, or appearing in the least doubtful of his position.

"I had supposed," said Mornay, "that the master usually chooses the servant instead of the servant the master."

"A common error!" quoth Ahab. "You are not the first that has fallen into it."

"I am most happy to be enlightened in a manner so convincing."

"No happier, my master, than your servant. But let your godship waste no words. Sit down and fall to. What I bring is simple, but it will renew the strength."

Sir Raoul, who had been ravenously hungry a short time before, was now comparatively without appetite, his mind pertinaciously feeding on the charms of Leoline, the Moorish maiden. He sat down at the table, and began to question Ahab, but not in a fashion to evade his penetrating perceptions. He endeavored to extract some information concerning her rank and present position, but the replies of the youth were vague and unsatisfactory; or, if they produced any impression, enhanced the mystery with which she was already invested. Finding he could extort nothing definite from Ahab, he signified his desire to be relieved of his company.

"Certainly, my master! I'll leave you, but will be near if you should want me. It is all the same!"

Left to himself, Mornay tried to sleep, but tossed restlessly upon the couch. The fatigues of travel and battle could not so far overpower him as to make him forget Leoline. It was in vain that he struggled against this new invader; it was in vain that he endeavored to fix his mind on the enterprise before him; it was in vain that he recalled the thought of other fair ones; it was in vain he looked for that mental shield of strength that he had so recently boasted of; it was in vain that he resorted to every device of an inventive imagination; Leoline was before him in whatever direction he turned his eyes. Leoline was in his brain, in his breast, in his thoughts, in his aspirations. In short, Leoline drifted continually in and out of his fancies, assuming a thousand pleasing shapes, till he was ready to believe himself the subject of magic arts.

The watch-tower took on the aspect of a diviner's laboratory; and as if to carry out and fulfill the conception to the letter, the door opened, and the diviner himself appeared, to the unspeakable astonishment of Sir Raoul. The person who entered was an old man, with flowing silver locks that reached to his shoulders, imparting a look exceedingly venerable. He wore a loose black robe, that fell quite to his feet, which were shod with sandals. His eyes were blue, his features noble rather than otherwise, and his expression that of grave and thoughtful melancholy. He carried under his arm a large, antique volume, closed with a broad iron clasp; while in the other hand he held a staff or rod, engraved with curious characters.

He was followed by a boy about twelve years old, bearing quaint and mystic instruments, together with a small astrolabe, and an extraordinary lamp in the form of a coiled serpent, with jets of flame streaming from the eyes. This singular conceit aided not a little to deepen the impression of the visitation in the mind of Mornay, who was so much amazed at the spectacle, that he lay like one paralyzed, motionless, and speechless.

The magician, for such indeed he seemed, advanced to the table with slow and measured steps, his mind abstracted, apparently, from every object but his occult occupations. Seating himself, he opened the antique volume, and placed it carefully on the table; while the lad, with the utmost reverence, arranged what he had brought within his reach. The old man made some signs, muttered unintelligibly, bent his head three times with solemnity, then read a few paragraphs from the book, in a strange tongue.

"Zegrim," he said, anon, looking at the boy, "art afraid?"

The magician's voice was clear and impressive.

The boy made a submissive bow, and answered:

"Great master, my heart is not strong, but I will abide the result."

"Child, nothing shall harm thee! Trust in me. Trust in my art. Trust in my control over the elements of mid-air and the elements of mother-earth. Trust in the Sacred Circle, the muttered invocation, and the potent prayer. Bare thine arm, and give me some drops of thy blood."

Zegrim held forth his arm; the magician made a slight puncture with the point of his dagger, and caught the red stream that began to flow, in a vessel. When he had procured enough for his purpose, he staunched the diminutive wound, and continued his preparations, unconscious, to all appearance, that a third party was present, noting his movements.

Into the crucible containing the blood he poured an amber-colored liquid from a vial, after which he added some small resinous balls. This done, he heated an iron rod in the fiery jets of the serpent's eyes, and ignited the mixture, which burned with a green flame, emitting a pungent odor.

"Art strong, Zegrim?" he asked.

"Master," replied the boy, with a genuflection of the body, "I am weak. I shrink from the dread mysteries of the cabala."

"Zegrim, swallow this!"

He gave the boy a green paste from a silver box.

"Dread master, thy slave does thy behest," answered Zegrim, and swallowed the paste.

"Thou shalt presently be strong. This pasta contains the very essence of life. It imparts the wisdom of Mohammed and the joy of the seventh heaven. It is the Gate of Paradise. Enter! What thou seest do not fear."

"Great Abaddon, I hear but to obey! Thine art has given me wings. Already I have supernatural sight. Forms begin to flit; shapes come forth in shadow."

At that moment a strong light appeared at the highest window of the watch-tower, where the watcher was wont to stand when waiting the approach or movements of an enemy. Mornay could not see whether there was really anything there, but the illumination continued some moments.

"Zegrim, tell me of the Spaniard and his aggressions. Will the Alhambra fall? Will the refusal of the fierce old King to render the degrading tribute of sixteen hundred captive Christians, or in lieu of them, the same number of Moors, to be reduced to the condition of slaves, and two thousand pistoles of gold, call out in full strength the armies of King Ferdinand?"

Sir Raoul heard these questions with intense curiosity.

"Wise Abaddon, you have asked nothing that yonder spirit of air"—he pointed to the window—"cannot, through me, answer. But I am bidden not to speak. Ask something else, O Abaddon! Nay, pause. Query not. See you, we are not alone. An unbeliever is listening; a Frank and an enemy. Turn your eyes and discover him."

"I did feel his presence, but attributed it to another cause. I will not turn my head to see a score of Christians! Unbeliever, what wouldst thou here? Answer truly or not at all; for to Abaddon, the magician, no one may safely lie."

"By my knightly honor, and by the love I bear to lady bright, I swear I have a mind to punish thy audacity!" exclaimed Mornay, arising. "You forget that you address an English knight, who brooks no insolence from mountebanks and itinerant magicians."

"Zegrim, who is this irreverent dog? How long ere Muley Aben Hassan will have his head?"

"Sovereign Lord, I may not lie to one who commandeth the spirits of air, the spirits of mother earth. This is an English knight, who seeks honor and glory under the banners of Spain. He is on the way to the Alhambra. Two accidents have befallen him: one, an ambuscade; the other, love."

The anger of Mornay subsided in a moment. The two truths that Zegrim had uttered were so pertinent and undeniable, that astonishment took the place of indignation.

"What means this mummerly?" he asked,

but in a voice so changed that it could not but be perceptible.

"A lady, fair as heaven's brightest star, sweeter than the breath of roses, haunts the heart of the Frank," answered Zegrim, in a low and musical voice.

"If I admitted this silly tale, and should ask you, most perspicacious youth, how the adventure would speed, what answer wouldst make?"

"Ask and see," said Zegrim.

"Consider that I have."

"Then I reply that many obstacles stand in your way; but your wishes, though difficult of attainment, may not be utterly futile. There is one condition on which you may obtain the hand of the Moorish beauty," responded the youth.

"Name it!" said Mornay, quickly.

The magician arose and drew a circle around Zegrim, murmured a few words close to his ear, touched his lips with his rod, and said:

"Zegrim, answer the Christian knight!"

"Great master, I hasten to obey! Find the apartment where your entertainer sleeps, and stab him to the heart!" answered the boy.

"By St. Jago! your impudence exceeds belief! Never heard I aught so base as this. There is more danger that I shall crop your ears, or throw you from the battlements of the tower, than that I should perform an act so unworthy of the spurs I wear. You and your sage master mistake English honor."

The Knight of the Red Cross frowned and grasped his sword by the scabbard, half inclined to beat the youth with it.

"But thou art but a child in the hands of a vile mountebank." Then, to Abaddon, who maintained his composure in a remarkable manner: "Take up the implements of thy jugglery, and go hence!"

"Listen, proud knight, to what the youth may yet say," he said, tranquilly.

"You did not entirely comprehend me," added the boy. His calmness equaled that of his master. "I mean, that while the Knight of the Sleeping Leopard lives, you cannot receive the hand of the fair lady, Leoline."

"If he lives till he die of false and traitorous act of mine, he will remain on earth till the end of time," answered Sir Raoul, with a contemptuous glance at the magician.

"A fortune is once offered to every man; yours is now within your reach; let it elude you, and it is lost forever!" continued Zegrim, looking steadily into the face of Abaddon, without displaying the least emotion or change of countenance.

Mornay could not but regard these two unequally-mated beings with interest. How the boy had obtained his knowledge respecting his state of feeling toward Leoline, he was at a loss to imagine; yet he had touched, with singular adroitness, a chord that vibrated within him most sensitively. What meant this intrusion and infamous proposition?

"That fortune can never be desirable that is purchased at the price of knightly faith. I never meet foeman, save with lance and sword, battle-axe and martel. Never would I kneel at the feet of a lady with my hands stained with a mean and inglorious action." Then, directing his discourse particularly to Abaddon: "I have heard the mummerly of this youth long enough for my pleasure. I would now fain have a taste of your own wisdom. You seem, in truth, a magician."

Abaddon gave the boy a small bolus from another box; he swallowed it submissively, and with a sigh and a shudder returned, apparently, to his normal condition.

"Where are those same spirits of air and of nether earth that you were going to summon before you? Give me proof of your vaunted power," said Sir Raoul, with a sneer.

"Whatever my art can do, I need not call before me the swift and subtle inhabitants of air or earth, to tell thee enough to indicate the way to future greatness. I perceive by that inspiration of wisdom that often possesses my aged frame, that three passions will much affect thy life and fortune. One has the power to bestow riches and honor; another, love and beauty; the third, disappointment and misery. Now, if the last should meet with his death 'tween this and the rising of the sun, your advancement is sure, both in arms and love. Nay, bend not thy brows on me, for I speak truly. As for thy mission to the King of Granada, I predict its utter failure. It is reported that Muley Aben Hassan has

sworn by his beard and the bones of the Prophet, that he will deliver no more Moors to be made slaves in tribute to King Ferdinand, according to the usage of his predecessor."

The concluding remarks were not without effect upon Raoul Mornay. He paused a moment, and answered:

"How you learned the nature of my journey to the Alhambra I know not; but it shall give you no advantage over me. Whether my mission fail or succeed, it shall be faithfully performed."

"You push from you the open hands of fame, and turn blindly from the flowery pathway of successful love. So be it! Allah judge between us! It was but a cut and a thrust; a turning aside of a little current of blood. The hour is passing. The invisible horologe of fate is ticking away the opportunity forever. Decide, and quickly!"

"With me, old man, it is a decision foregone. A Knight of the Red Cross spurns such temptations with unutterable contempt! Far better to perish, piecemeal, of wasting love, than obtain happiness in the perfidious manner you mean. Away, Sir, away! Your hairs are gray and your aspect venerable. I would respect age, but I hold treachery in inexpressible abhorrence!"

"The clock of destiny has ticked the last instant of your opportunity," replied the magician, arising with much dignity. "You a phantom of honor you have sacrificed what you adore. We shall meet again; it is so written, and what is written must be fulfilled. The stars, the occult elements, and the leaves of destiny, cannot lie. It is well, haughty Christian! You may break lances; but know that your own heart will break, if you be not more than human. Farewell! till our life-lines again cross each other."

Abaddon took up his book, Zegrim gathered up the implements he had brought, and holding aloft the serpent-lamp, followed his master reverently from the watch-tower.

CHAPTER III.

A SURPRISE.

Raoul Mornay witnessed the departure of his strange visitors with varied emotions. Full of thought, he retired to a window commanding, in a clear day, a vast extent of country, now shrouded by the curtain of night. He looked down upon the court, and the wall, and the silent sentry-boxes perched upon it. While thus gazing, strains of delicious music were wafted to his ears. His instincts at once assured him who was the singer. He leaned from the battlements with fluttering eagerness, in an earnest endeavor to distinguish the burden of the song; but could only learn that it was in the Moorish tongue.

His heart swelled within him, and his chivalric nature confessed the power of woman. He mentally vowed to perform deeds that should render him worthy of winning her favor.

As he looked at the scene beneath, objects grew more defined, and he presently discerned figures moving lightly and stealthily to and fro outside the wall. What these movements portended, he knew not; but the singing having ceased, he gave his entire attention to them. Anon, scaling-ladders were placed against the wall, and about a dozen armed men mounted and dropped noiselessly into the court.

Sir Raoul now began to apprehend that this boded no good, and had an appearance of mischief calculated to arouse well-grounded suspicions of treachery. He could see the glitter of their weapons as they crouched on the earth, with their faces to the tower. Soon, one detached himself from the party to reconnoitre. The secrecy and silence of the whole transaction plainly indicated that this was a visit unexpected by the inmates. He was on the point of descending to inform Abdallah of what was occurring, when Ahab the Witty came in unbidden, with a step somewhat quicker than usual.

"I have not called," said Mornay, coldly.

"It is all the same; I can come just as well without calling. Does your worship like a bout now and then? If so, take your sword and come with me," answered Ahab.

"To what purpose? I would know thy meaning better," said Sir Raoul.

"While I stop to explain, the mischief will be done, the Lady Leoline carried off, and her brother murdered," added Ahab, with marvelous serenity.

"Why saidst thou not this before?" cried Mornay, snatching his sword from the table. "Lead on, boy; and if thou liest, I'll cleave thy head from thy shoulders at a single stroke. Hasten—run—fly!"

"Too much haste, your godship, is sometimes as dangerous as too much delay."

"Do not trifle with my impatience, for I am not wont to be over tender with the forward and self-willed. Have a care of your neck."

"My neck has but one bone in it, and my head will remain upon it as long as Allah pleases; if, however, it should chance to tumble off, I shall go to the Paradise of the Prophet, and solace myself with black-eyed houris. So you see I have every reason to be indifferent about the time of my death. Life has a great many conveniences, and we are not certain that death has any. Besides, I owe the man-at-arms, Kalif, two pistoles, which I should get rid of paying if I should happen to be cut into two pieces."

"The devil take thee and thy pistoles," exclaimed the knight. "Give me more of thy legs and less of thy tongue."

"Silence is necessary in this adventure, therefore your worship will please observe it after we are on the way."

Mornay looked again from the window and saw the armed men gliding toward the tower. He unsheathed his sword, and turned fiercely upon Ahab, who, with a lamp in his hand, began to move. He preceded the knight down the stairs, at the foot of which hung from a hook a Moorish cimetar, which he buckled to his side.

"Where sleeps the lady?" demanded Sir Raoul, eagerly.

"Thou'lt find out soon enough, I'll warrant; for, by Allah, a maiden will scream so when there's danger, that you may hear her a mile off."

"Provoking dog!" muttered Mornay. "Conduct me to Abdallah."

"Thou are going to him as fast as is prudent. It's a poor firelock that goes off of itself. Never fear that I'll give your godship plenty of work. And you shall see me shearing heads, too, as if they were onions; and the blood shall flow as though we were stabbing wine-sacks."

"Not so fast as thy heels will go, saucy Ahab."

"That will be as heaven wills. I shall run if it is so written, and I shall fight if it is so recorded, and it will make no manner of difference. If I should be chopped up, have the fragments collected and cast into the river Zenil, that I may serve, when dead, to feed the fishes, which fed me while living. It will be all the same!"

At that moment Sir Raoul heard piercing screams and the clashing of arms, and ran toward the sounds with the swiftness of an arrow. Ahab kept at his heels. When he reached the apartment where he had seen Leoline, he found Abdallah defending himself against three men, who pressed upon him fiercely; while three others had seized the lady, and were leading her away in spite of her struggles.

Maddened by the spectacle, he attacked them with great impetuosity. He cleft the skull of one, lopped an arm from another, and his tried Toledo blade swept the head of the third from his shoulders.

Seizing the nearly fainting Leoline and placing her upon a divan, he hastened to the aid of Abdallah, and perceived, to his astonishment, that Ahab had already disabled one of the assailants, and was in a fair way to do the same service for another. But, meantime, the remaining six had come in, so that now there were eight opposed to three, and one of the three a mere youth.

It was a proud moment for the Knight of the Red Cross. The eyes of lady bright were on him. He was doing battle in the presence and for the safety of the most beautiful maiden in the world. The thought inspired him with the strength of Hercules. All the chivalry in his nature was awakened. He glowed with knightly fervor. He threw himself against the Moors, and they bit the dust. His sword gleamed like lightning. No hand could parry his thrusts or evade his blows. In a few moments, with the aid of Abdallah and the strange youth, Ahab, victory was won, and the Vermilion Tower was in their undisputed possession.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAVOR OF LADY.

Both Mornay and Abdallah stood grim and panting, leaning on their bloody swords. Ahab, only, maintained his coolness and composure. He contemplated the dead and wounded as if such sanguinary deeds had been his business from childhood.

"It was decreed," quoth he, "that we should smite them." Then to Raoul. "Your worship has done wonders this night, but you could never have dispatched this business without me."

"Let these carcasses be removed," said Abdallah.

A groom and two servitors now ventured to appear, and hastened to obey this order.

Abdallah turned to Mornay.

"Knight of the Red Cross," he said, "thou hast proved thy title to thy spurs in a manner no noble gentleman can gainsay. Without the aid of thy doughty arm, I should be now but a dead man, and yonder fair lady a prisoner, reserved for what sufferings Allah only knows. White-headed sage and wise astrologer predicted, long ago, that my life was dangerous to the safety of Granada, in consequence of which I have been sorely beset by one in power, on whose kindness I have some claim. I may not yet divulge my secret; but the man who calls himself Abdallah offers thee the hand of friendship."

"It is accepted, gallant Moor. I have but now seen thee do brave work. Thou art skillful in the use of that Damascus blade. It descends as swiftly on the foe as the fire of heaven discharged from a cloud. Thou shouldst receive the accolade from King Ferdinand himself; for I swear thou art worthy!"

Abdallah smiled, and lifted himself haughtily.

"I like not thy master," he answered; "he is brave and wise, but crafty and cruel. He keeps not faith with the Moor."

"Thou art wrong," said Mornay. "It is the Moor that regards not treaties, and repudiates solemn compacts. Is not the annual tribute of sixteen hundred slaves and two thousand pistoles withheld, though often demanded?"

"It was a most infamous treaty!" exclaimed Abdallah, earnestly. "Who would condemn young girls and tender youth to perpetual bondage in the Land of the Cross, without lamentations and tears and undying remorse? I appeal to thee, Sir Raoul Mornay, if it be just; if it be humane; if it ought longer to be borne?"

"Courteous Moslem, thou askest a hard question of one whose sword and lance are devoted to Spain; but if I must answer, nothing but the truth shall pass my lips. I do hold that the agreement was disgraceful to those who acceded to it. I maintain that the conquered had not sufficient regard for their own honor, and that the conqueror exacted ungenerous terms."

"Sir Raoul, thou speakest well! I have great respect for thy integrity. But of these subjects we will not discourse. The time is past when I could mend or make in this matter. Let us attend to my unfortunate sister."

"She is very well," said Ahab, "and her bright eyes were on you both while you dealt with these traitors."

The manly cheeks of Raoul flushed with pleasure.

"It is not strange that we gained the victory," he said. "The presence and danger of a lady so lovely would nerve the weakest arm to deeds of high emprise."

"Thou art as ready with thy speech as with thy sword. Come and receive her thanks."

Abdallah took his hand and led him to Leoline.

"Sister," said the Moor, "behold your brave defender. But for his invincible arm, our most unnatural foe would have prevailed. I should have perished, and you have been conveyed you know whither, to suffer you know not what. Sister, what a misfortune it is to be born unlucky! They have done well who called me El Zogoybi, or the unfortunate."

Leoline, who was greatly agitated, arose from her recumbent position with some embarrassment, and disengaging a red scarf from her person, presented it to Sir Raoul, who, dropping upon one knee, received it in the most reverent manner.

"Fairest of ladies," he said, in a subdued voice, "I accept this as a most precious gift!"

Not all the treasures of earth and sea would possess the value in my eyes of this favor. I will wear it in the hour of battle and danger. It shall go to the field where lances are broken. It shall flutter in the fierce career, and, by the help of God, come safely from the deadly shock of opposing arms. It shall admonish me at all times of my fealty to ladies bright and chivalric actions."

"Your tongue is agile," interposed Abdallah. "Your courtly phrases far surpass my poor ability. Arise, and cease to pour forth these fine things. No one can doubt your courage, and when next you gallop to the tented field, no prouder favor will flutter on the breast of gallant cavalier. Arise, and consider thyself fortunate."

Then to Leoline:

"Thou art royal in thy gifts. Sir Raoul will be the most envied knight in Granada."

"The poor gift of an ell of cashmere but ill requites the high deserts of this English knight. He has done his devoir right well this night; and I thank him for life and liberty preserved," answered Leoline, with humid eyes.

"Name it not, lady! The consciousness of having served you gives me a pleasure that more rewards me. I swear by the holy cross, emblem of my faith, that I esteem myself most lucky. With this precious token"—he knotted it over his shoulder—"I shall undertake any adventure, however hazardous, assured of victory."

"You could spare it better than sword or lance," said Ahab. "For my part, I should infinitely rather have something more substantial; for instance, something that I could eat and drink, or that would keep me warm, or to fight with. This may answer with belted knights, godships, and worships, and other kind of ships; but it never will do for Ahab the Witty, and the hungry."

That melancholy smile which Mornay had more than once observed, flitted over the lips of Abdallah. He looked kindly, too, at the youth, much to the astonishment of Sir Raoul, who had anticipated that he would be severely rebuked for his familiarity.

"This is an eccentric lad," said the latter. "I expected that he would run away at the first meeting of steel; but he displayed as much courage of his inches as any of us."

"I fought because it was written. I deserve neither praise nor blame. Nothing happens by accident. Had it been decreed that I should run, I should quickly have found the use of my heels. It is all the same!"

"You have a philosopher in your household," said Mornay, smiling.

"Philosophers, like poets, are philosophers born. Ahab had his own way and his own wit, and is often useful, and on this account enjoys peculiar privileges. Remain here, Sir Raoul, while I go to make some observations without. I can no longer feel secure in this old fortress, for my enemy is not of a disposition to allow me the least immunity from danger, after having learned my hiding-place. We are fugitives and wanderers, with the curse of a terrible prediction upon us. Alas! whither shall we direct our persecuted footsteps? Where shall we find safety and secrecy? What cavern is deep enough to hide the luckless Abdallah?"

The Moor pronounced these words with much feeling. Leoline was deeply affected.

"Be not disheartened," she said, in a tender voice. "Heaven will find some way of relief. You will yet be restored to your own. Call to your soul that dignity and firmness which the occasion requires. Courage, vigilance, and cunning, united, may yet extricate us from these difficulties. Go and attend to your duties, and let your brave friend accompany you to aid you by his advice and ready discernment. Look from the battlements to see if other enemies approach. See that none lurk within the precincts of the tower. Search every nook large enough to conceal an assassin. I make not these suggestions so much for myself as for you; you who are destined to a name and place in the history of Granada. If it be needful, my brother, fly and leave me. My life is but of small worth and consequence when weighed in the balance with yours."

"Incomparable sister, you bring me to a sense of my own manhood. I will bear in mind who and what I am. As for the curse of hoary soothsayers, I will endeavor to regard it as the shallowest device of knaves

and mountebanks. When I fly from thee to save life or liberty, may Allah fly from me!" responded Abdallah, with more dignity and feeling than he had yet manifested.

"Come, Sir Raoul," he added, "let us attend to the seasonable suggestions of my sister. If there are no enemies in sight by morning, we may, I think, remain here till I can find a safer retreat."

"If you take my advice, you will not so much as move a finger," said Ahab, "for, everything having been determined beforehand, you can neither mend nor make by anything you can do. If the stars doom you to the dagger, to the dagger you will go, fly in what direction you may. It is impossible for one to die till the very hour and instant of his time arrives. Go and throw yourself headlong from the watch-tower, and, my word for it, you will jump up as blithe as a cricket if your stars haven't marked that day as your last. All events should be looked at with the greatest indifference. Let come what will, it is all the same!"

CHAPTER V.

SIR RAOUL KEEPS WATCH AND WARD.

An anxious day followed at the Vermilion Tower. Nothing transpired to disturb their tranquillity or excite additional anxiety. As soon as night came on, Raoul Mornay secretly stationed himself in the court, in full armor, with visor down, and his good sword by his side. Abdallah had pressed upon him the necessity of rest, believing that his two servitors and the groom, with an occasional vigil of his own, would be sufficient to insure them against another surprise. While the Moor supposed Mornay in the watch-tower reposing, he was walking silently to and fro beneath Leoline's window, listening to every sound; intent on the discharge of a trust which, it seemed to him, Heaven had imposed.

In this pleasing employment, which accorded so well with his fancy and ambition, he dwelt on the charms of the Moorish lady, sighing, now and then, that she was of a different faith, and loved the Crescent better than the Cross. In the midst of such reflections, his heart was thrilled with tender sentiments by the sound of her voice gushing from the window above in a bird-like melody. On this occasion he was able to distinguish the words. The song was a plaintive ballad, an echo of her present state of mind.

The Knight of the Red Cross was ravished with the softness and sweetness of her voice, and stood like an effigy of steel till the strain ceased. He pressed her scarl to his breast with his mailed hand, and swore eternal fealty to the Lady Leoline, notwithstanding the mystery that at present enshrouded her, and perplexed him. In confirmation of this vow, he drew forth his sword and kissed the hilt, which was in the form of the sacred cross. The plates of steel upon him seemed to lose their weight. Animated by devotion, he went his rounds with a lightness and elasticity that surprised himself. Woman, always revered by him, as a true knight, was now exalted, through Leoline, into a creation of poetry and perfection. He had found his saint, and willingly yielded her the most precious incense of his soul.

He was in this rapture of high enthusiasm, when Ahab the Witty came, most inopportunistly, to interrupt his ecstatic reverie. The knight received him with a sternness that did not invite confidence.

"Your worship," quoth Ahab, "it appears to me, has great pleasure in carrying about all that iron and steel, which, it is my belief, would grieve the back of a horse."

Sir Raoul deigned no reply, but kept on his round.

"Having chosen you as my master, I shall serve you whether you will or no. It is all the same! My wit tells me that you will receive a great many hard thumps, and arrive at the distinguished honor of being thanked by great people for foolishly exposing your precious life for them. As for myself, I had rather any time have doubloons than knocks; but, being nothing but Ahab the Witty, nothing better can be expected of me."

"Thou art privileged," said Mornay. "One has tolerated thee whom I much revere."

"I am miserably ignorant," returned Ahab; "but it is my belief that my ignorance is better than your wisdom. Now, if you should

ask your new servant some questions that are uppermost in your mind, who knows but he would answer them?"

Ahab paused; so did Mornay. They stood confronting each other, a most marked contrast; the one gleaming and towering in steel, the other of diminished stature, clad in simple Moorish costume, with a curved sword girt at his youthful waist—the one a Goliath, the other a David. For the first time, Sir Raoul was fully sensible of the singular qualities of this unique youth. He was so impressed by the discovery of his originality, that he wondered he had not bestowed more notice on him.

"Who knows but he would answer them?" he mentally repeated. Now there certainly were some queries in Mornay's mind that he would willingly propose to any one who could give them a solution. He had entertained doubts of Ahab, and he was not yet free of them; but the youth held out a bait that he could not resist. He resolved to test him somewhat.

"Prithee, what should I care to know that thou canst answer?"

"That your worship should best understand. Remember that I am but Ahab the Witty; and it is folly for the wittiest person in the world to ask questions and answer them himself," replied Ahab, with composure.

"How know you, if I were to accept your challenge, but I might ask the names and condition of those within this tower?"

"Who knows?" echoed Ahab, coolly.

"Thou art a most provoking varlet! Solve me the question."

"Then it is a question, your godship?"

"It is."

"Inform me, Sir Knight, why I should favor you with information withheld by the one called Abdallah?"

"If thou comest to trifle with me, begone!"

"Such is not my errand. I came to prove my devotion to you, my master. But if you care not to hear me, it is all the same. A thing that isn't to be won't be."

"In Heaven's name, have thine own way! Tell what thou wilt in thine own time and manner. Thou hast the cunning of the devil and the obstinacy of a mule."

"I tell thee again, it is all the same. Listen! Listen to this wisdom of Ahab the Witty."

Ahab tucked up his cimeter, and seated himself comfortably on the ground, quite undisturbed by the curiosity and impatience he had excited.

"Know, Sir Knight of those same and several red crosses which you seem to have great pride in, that you are actually and verily, duly and truly, and perpendicularly, standing beneath the window of a princess."

"Now, saucy knave, thou tamperest with me!" said Mornay, angrily.

"Whether you believe or not, it is all the same. It was written that I should reveal it, and that you should disbelieve it. It does not trouble me. I never was troubled. I never shall be troubled. Your incredulity does not affect the truth in the least. The lady is a princess; her brother a prince. She is the daughter of a king; he is the son of a king."

Ahab crossed his legs, and looked up from his lowliness like a pigmy at a giant.

"I know not whether to trust the tale," said Sir Raoul, dubiously.

"It is all one, and of the same significance. We believe and think nothing of our own wills," replied the Witty.

"What king?" asked Mornay.

"Muley Aben Hassan," answered Ahab.

The knight was silent some time. He struggled with astonishment and unbelief.

"This, then, is that unfortunate prince, Boabdil?"

"The identical! He could not be more a prince if a dozen kings were his father. And his sister is as much of a princess as if all the queens in the world had assisted at her birth. You may have heard, perchance, the tale of their escape from the Alhambra."

"I have heard of the escape of Boabdil; but never, till now, knew that a sister fled with him," said Mornay.

"Having seen her with your own eyes, you cannot doubt it. If she be not fair enough for a princess, I would advise you to clap that hundred-weight of iron upon your horse, and go where you may light on a fairer."

"She is fair enough for a queen or an angel!" replied the knight, enthusiastically.

"I see in what quarter sets the wind, your worship. You will break some five hundred lances if you live long enough, and your heart into the bargain, for that identical she. For my part, I never could see the difference between a princess and a woman—every woman being some man's princess, though he be as humble as a water-carrier. Maidens of every degree love and hate precisely alike; and if I were going to marry to-morrow, I don't think I would hit on a princess. Now, my master, when you run at another infatuated gentleman with a pole ten feet long thrust over your horse's head, have some little care of your own body, that you do not get spitted like a barnyard fowl. Once run through the body, I see no possible good that lady's favor can do you. That pretty little rag around you, for instance, could no more stop a hole in your chest than the mountain could come to Mohammed. According to my taste, I had rather have a kiss than a knock on the head. A kiss is a kiss, and it's no better, and you are no better for being battered and bruised before you get it. If I loved a princess, I should say to her, 'Marry me, my handsome, and I'll make you happier than any king in the world can.'"

"Till I have asked your opinion, witty Ahab, you would do well not to give it. You have natural good parts, however, and a deal of malapertness. Now, run and mount yonder wall, and take a good look."

Ahab placed a ladder against the wall, and mounted it deliberately, agreeably to his style of doing things. He returned, after having made the entire circumference of the tower.

"Hast seen anything?" asked the knight.

"Much," said Ahab.

"What?"

"The mountains lying in the faint moonlight; and groups of trees in pale shadow; and the heavens over my head; and the wall on which I stood; and your godship boxed up in steel, pacing to and fro like an owl; and the watch-tower, looming darkly; and—"

"No more of thy wit, an thou lovest ease and freedom from distress! If this was all you saw, have done with jesting. Broken bones oft come of folly."

"It is all the same! 'Fore God, I saw no more than what I have told you."

"Go again on the same errand."

Ahab obeyed as quietly as before, and came back with a similar report.

"Go yet again," said Mornay.

The third time he returned as slowly as at first, seated himself on the ground, and waited to be questioned.

"What saw you this time?" asked the knight.

"All that I saw before," answered Ahab.

"And no more?"

"I said not so, my master. You will find, on subjecting me to strict examination, that I made an additional discovery."

"Well, knave?"

"Well, your godship?"

Sir Raoul groaned with vexation.

"Art ill, my master? If so, I will run and fetch some physic. I'll be bound the Princess knows a thing or two of simples, and could, in case of extremity, dress a flea-bite or pull out the sting of a bee," said Ahab, with aggravating serenity.

"Tell me what more you saw, you gadfly!" cried Mornay, whose patience was taxed to such a degree that he had hard work to keep from giving the youth a hearty drubbing.

"Since your worship comes to the point, I saw some thirty horsemen toiling up the mountain; but be assured, most valorous knight, that they can never get to the top of it unless it be the will of God."

"Imp of Satan!" exclaimed Mornay, in a rage. "Why withhold so long such an important discovery?"

"How often have I told you, my master, that nothing can be that is not to be. It is probably decreed that they shall climb the mountain and cut our throats. But it is all the same! If our throats are to be cut, the quicker they are cut the better. I do not advise that we stir an inch."

"May the devil take your stoicism! Run at once and inform Boabdil what you have seen, and I will meanwhile, take a look at these horsemen."

Mornay ascended to the top of the wall and turned his gaze adown the mountain.

No suspicious object or objects were visible. He tried his eyes from different quarters. At first he could see the dim skies meeting the earth within the short area, but as his sight grew more familiar with the landmarks, trees, shrubs, and vines grew out of the mistiness, and his vision took a more expansive range. A slight shimmer in the mild moonlight, like the dancing of the firefly, finally drew his attention, then the shields of armed men gradually became defined, and admitted no longer of uncertainty.

By dint of looking, Sir Raoul perceived that the party had stopped, and were huddled closely together, as if in consultation, or to present as small an object to the eye as possible. While he was considering this ominous appearance, a voice from the outer side of the wall addressed him. It was the magician, Abaddon, who spoke. Casting his regards downward, Sir Raoul beheld him leaning on his rod, somewhat bent, like a man bowed by the weight of years, his long white hair fluttering over his grave and thoughtful face.

"Sir Knight," he said, "I have consulted the spirits that rule the hour, and they speak not in thy favor."

"That disturbs me not," replied Mornay.

"Knowing thy duty, thou art lingering over long near the bower of lady fair," returned Abaddon.

"It concerns not thee, old man. Go thy way with thy mummery, or I may see fit to detain thee," said Raoul, in a menacing voice.

"What wearest thou on thy breast?" interrogated the magician, preserving his equanimity.

"I know not that I should tell thee. Begone, juggler! We have no need of thy pretentious art. Our fortunes come fast enough, without the aid of the occult sciences."

"I told thee that thine hour had passed; but let down that ladder, and give me a lift over the wall, and I will tell thee that which may still be to thy worldly emolument."

"Art thou armed?"

"Yes, with dagger, with my book of the occult art; while my lad bears an astrolabe and various instruments of the nature thou hast already seen. I am about to try a new and abstruse, and withal critical, conjuration, which, in order to insure its success, must take place at a certain distance from the earth; therefore, I pray thee, give me and Zegrim access to the watch-tower, which is well adapted to my purpose. Gratify the whim of an old man, and I am sure thou wilt be rewarded by the Prophet."

"It is a time of danger to those within, besides, I remember your mummery of last night, and like thee not. Go at once, or I will send those that will drive thee hence."

"Threaten not," answered the old man, solemnly, "those who interpret the decrees of heaven. Vaunt not thyself in thy strength, for I know that there are few within the walls to do thy bidding. But receive not this as menace. I will give thee handsome guerdon of gold, of which I have great store; for you must know that I have accomplished the mystery of projection, and can transmute at pleasure."

"Speak not of bribes to a belted knight! I would not admit thee for a camel-load of gold! Were it not for thy gray hairs, I would punish thee for thy base lures and propositions of yesternight."

"Haughty Frank, you shall yet feel the power of Abaddon, the Magician!"

The old man raised his rod, and a concealed marksman discharged a matchlock, and Mornay received a shock upon his breastplate that hurled him from the top of the wall to the ground, where he lay, quite deprived of motion and sense.

Boabdil, as we shall now call him, having taken an observation from the watch-tower after receiving the information from Ahab, reached the court in time to hear the report of a matchlock, and see Mornay topple from the wall. Telling Ahab to attend to the knight, Boabdil ran swiftly to the top of the wall and dropped down upon the outer side. Ahab raised Mornay and unclosed his helmet. The air revived him, for happily his mail of proof had effectually resisted the ball from the weapon.

The furious ringing and clashing of good steel blades reached his ears. Unable to arise, he listened to what was, obviously, a sharp, fierce conflict.

"In God's name, help me to arise!" he said to Ahab. "My friend is in danger."

"You are little short of that yourself. Worry not, I beseech you. The Prince cannot be slain if his time is not come. Nor have you wind enough to go to his aid. If you be not dead, it was because it was impossible to kill you. If an armorer's workshop had fallen from the wall, with all its implements and handicraft, it could not have made a greater clatter than your worship made in this identical tumble."

While the Witty was talking, he helped the knight to get upon his feet, who, though bruised by the fall, was in no other way injured. The angry clashing of steel had now ceased. Sir Raoul mounted the ladder, and looking down, discovered Boabdil, leaning upon his cimeter, with a ghastly pallor upon his countenance.

CHAPTER VI.

IT IS ALL THE SAME.

Sir Raoul was surprised at Boabdil's agitation. Thinking he was hurt, perhaps mortally wounded, he began to question him, but he made no answer.

"Is your worship blind?" said Ahab, "that you do not perceive that he presents not the appearance of one wounded with steel, but of something sharper. It is a shock of the mind, my master."

Ahab drew up the ladder and placed it on the other side of the wall, that Boabdil might ascend; who, after standing a long time, came up, his face yet exceedingly pale.

"Where is your adversary? Surely, I heard the dangerous play of steel. Thou seemest in great perplexity," said Mornay.

"Question me not, brave follower of the cross. That which has happened I may not tell thee. I have escaped a peril greater than that which threatens life alone. I have not been vanquished by the sword of my enemy; and yet there was a dreadful danger which, had it not been providentially discovered, would have filled my after-life with remorse and horror," answered Boabdil, with much solemnity of manner.

"I saw no one save the old man, Abaddon, the Magician, who seemed an inmate of the tower last night," returned Sir Raoul. "He performed, in my presence, various juggleries, and had the audacity to make a proposition so base, that had it not been for his age and weakness, would have met with prompt chastisement."

"By the bones of Mohammed! Sayest thou so?" cried Boabdil. "How gained he admission?"

"I know not. I supposed him, at first, a member of your household; afterward, that he was one affected in his understanding; lastly, a dangerous fanatic."

"This is indeed a revelation!" said Boabdil, manifestly astonished and excited by Sir Raoul's announcement. "What might have been the nature of his proposal?" he added, with emotion.

"No less than your foul murder, with a promise of great emoluments and honors, and more than I will mention."

Boabdil covered his face with his hands; his feelings overpowered him; his person shook with the intensity of his mysterious sorrow.

"El Zogoybi!" he muttered. "Accursed be those who cast my horoscope!"

"I believe not in the arts of the astrologer or the devices of the magician," said Mornay.

"It is affirmed," answered Boabdil, impressively, "that those who consulted the stars at my birth were filled with fear and trembling when they read their direful language."

"The trick of impostors!" returned Sir Raoul.

"Not so, Christian knight. Everything that has happened has confirmed the truth of their predictions," sadly answered Boabdil.

"I know not but I esteem the occult sciences too lightly; yet in my judgment the prophecy has been the father to itself, and produced the very misfortunes it augured." Boabdil shook his head mournfully.

"The curse of Heaven is on me!" he murmured.

"It is all the same," interposed Ahab. "If one is cursed by heaven, it is because the will of heaven must be done, and the case is no more his fault than his birth. No one has yet had the privilege of saying if he would be born or no; neither has any one had the

privilege of saying if he would be cursed or no. Therefore, as I said, it is all the same."

"The fellow is not without reason," mused Boabdil. "There is plausibility in his speech, but I have indulged too long in this weakness. What seem those horsemen to be doing now?"

"They have dismounted near that cluster of trees, yonder, if I have any wit, and are partaking of refreshment. May their food stick in their throats! May the water they drink drown them! But if neither come to pass, it is all the same!"

This was the wisdom of Ahab, the son of nobody that anybody knew anything about, and caused the Knight of the Red Cross to smile, notwithstanding his bruises and the danger which threatened the mistress of his heart.

"I know too well the errand of yonder horsemen," said Boabdil. "It is me they seek. It were better perhaps that I go forth and offer them the life so earnestly sought."

His voice was strangely sweet and melancholy.

"I swear by my knightly vows," cried Mornay, lifting his mailed hand on high, "that if you go forth to surrender your life in this fashion, I will bear you companionship and share your fate!"

"And I," quoth Ahab, "swear to ye by my stomach, and by my flesh and blood, and by the black-eyed houris of Paradise—of which about threescore are reserved for me—and by that tremendous angel whose eyes are three days apart, that if you do such a foolish thing, that I will not stir a step from this tower! There would be infinitely more wisdom in running from them than toward them; but if you have a different notion, have your own sweet wills, and be cut up finer than a conserve of meats!"

"Truly, this knave hath natural wit," said Sir Raoul.

"Have you horses enough to mount your few followers and your sister?" he added, after a pause.

"I have," replied Boabdil; "of my former state so much remains to me. It is a wise thought, and may offer the means of escape to her. Ahab, go and order the groom and those two faithful attendants who have adhered to me in my misfortunes, to prepare horses for instant flight."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOOM OF THE VERMILION TOWER.

Boabdil sent to announce to Leoline his resolve to leave the tower, while Sir Raoul remained, observing the movements of the emissaries of the King of Granada; for such they doubtless were. On this occasion, he was careful to screen himself from the matchlocks of a concealed enemy. In about fifteen minutes, the horsemen began to mount, and as fast as they were in the saddle, turned the heads of their steeds toward the Vermilion Tower. Seven horses, by this time, stood saddled in the court, and the servants were engaged in bringing from Leoline's apartment such articles as could be conveniently carried.

"Delay not!" cried Mornay, "I can hear the clatter of hoofs." Boabdil appeared, supporting his sister. The upper part of her person was covered by a veil, which clouded without concealing her beauty. Her brother lifted her to the saddle. Sir Raoul wished it had been his agreeable duty to render that service. He kept his position on the wall, that he might be the last to mount. All were in the saddle save Ahab, who had been missing some time. The servants could give no account of him. Boabdil waited for his appearance.

"I can see the nodding of their plumes!" exclaimed Mornay, anxiously.

"The youth, Ahab, is absent," answered the Prince. "We wait his coming."

There was an interval of silence.

"I hear their voices!" warned Sir Raoul, in a voice somewhat husky. "I swear by the Cross that you cannot escape if you go not at once! Linger longer, and they will reach this wall as you issue from the opposite postern."

"Mount, Sir Raoul. We must needs leave the wayward youth to his fate."

Mornay needed no second bidding; he descended from the wall, drew away the ladder, and threw himself upon his steed, which reared and curved his neck as if proud of the burden he bore. The knight experienced

sensations of pleasure in again bestriding his faithful horse. They swept around the tower to a portal little used save for secret egress. As they issued from the court, they heard the dull clangor of shields and the jangle of cimeters at the opposite point.

Old Ali was about to close and fasten the gate, when Boabdil forbade him.

"I will give the poor youth a chance, though it be at my own peril," he said.

They rode away gently at first, increasing their speed as they left the tower behind. They were half-way down the mountain when Ahab came clattering after them, to the great satisfaction of all but Ali, who grumbled, and hinted that his tardiness would probably ruin their well-devised purpose, and bring the enemy after them, helter-skelter.

"Will your worships stop a moment?" said Ahab, with his customary phlegm. "From this level spot you can look back and see the tower distinctly; and I have my reasons for wishing you to watch it while you may count your fingers some ten times without any particular hurry. Observe, my masters, how the white, dim light of the moon quivers along the battlements? Who knows that we shall look upon it again?"

From some undefinable impulse, Leoline stopped and turned to look at the tower. The whole party followed her example, the irascible old Ali twirling his beard and muttering his disapproval.

"That accursed boy," quoth he, "will bring us all to the cimeter!"

"That fabric," said Boabdil, "has loomed on yonder summit for centuries. Many changes have happened to the Moor since it was reared. Ahab, why did you linger?"

"It was so determined," answered Ahab.

"Had they scaled the wall before you left?"

"They were swarming over it, like sheep over a stile, when I led my horse from the postern, and bolted it?"

"Were you seen, think you?" asked Ali.

"No more than you can see your own ill-humor!" retorted Ahab. "They are now running through the tower like a kitten after its tail," he added. "Perhaps they'll pursue us; perhaps they won't. But it is all the same!"

While they had their eyes fixed on the sombre turrets, the whole massive pile arose suddenly and startlingly in air. Then a great blaze of fire flashed to heaven, there was a terrific explosion, and the entire fabric subsided and crumbled away out of sight, leaving, where it had stood, a black pall of smoke. The adjoining mountains roared back a frightful echo, while the earth shook beneath the feet of the appalled spectators.

For some seconds huge fragments of stone were falling around the scene of the catastrophe. Among other sounds could be distinguished the mad bounds of affrighted horses dashing frantically from the spot. The air billowed to and fro, and it was some time before the booming murmurs of the reverberations died away.

The parties looked at each other in amazement, if not absolute dismay.

"This is a very extraordinary occurrence," said Boabdil.

"Most sudden and awe-inspiring!" observed Leoline.

"It has involved your enemies in destruction," added Mornay.

"Allah achbar! God is great!" said Boabdil, reverentially.

"Ahab had a hand in it, I'll swear," muttered Ali. "Nothing happens that he hasn't something to do with."

"Not so, old grumbler!" said Ahab. "I do only what I am forced to do. If I had my own way, I would not lift my hand to do anything. We are all pushed forward like a weaver's shuttle."

"Ahab," said Boabdil, "tell us how this happened?"

"When your worship speaks, the air that comes out of your mouth is like the breath of the Prophet; and I can no more withstand it than I can the hot wind on the desert. In this manner it came to pass:—The wisdom of a santón fell on me like a fragment of stone from the top of a wall. So great was the force of my inspiration, or wit, or whatever your godships may please to call it, that I immediately became a machine, or as one of those effigies or wooden manikins that are actuated by secret springs."

"If your introduction were shorter, we should be better pleased," said Boabdil, with some impatience.

"If your worship can tell it better than I, I will listen with all my ears. But being, as I said, urged on like the beam of a battering-ram, I ran down to the vaults of the tower, where was stored a goodly quantity of that explosive substance used by artillerymen in the projection of globes of iron, stones, and other missiles, also for the firing of matchlocks."

"Come at once to thy tale!" added Boabdil, with a frown.

"My speech must flow even as it is decreed. Opening one of the vessels containing this black powder, I laid a train communicating with the whole store. At the end of this train I placed a slow-match, and, knowing that nothing could happen that was not foreseen and predestinated, I walked leisurely from the tower, and leading the nag you left me 'neath the open portal, followed your worships to the best of my skill and ability. As you perceive, the tower has disappeared. The cause of its destruction, who knows? It may have been the will of Allah; it may have been the black powder."

Ahab looked calmly up at the cloud of smoke that hung over them and was gradually expanding into space, impregnating the atmosphere with a sulphurous odor.

"There might have been," he resumed, "a dozen men within the walls, searching for your worship and my divine lady. Again, there might not have been but ten or eleven. It would have been safer for them had they been farther off; but it was their fortune. They could no more help being there than I could help laying the train. Perhaps Heaven interposed for their safety; possibly they were blown sky-high. But it is all the same."

"This youth," said Raoul, "is crammed to the throat with philosophy!"

"Your godship will forbear interrupting me till I have had my say. The good Moslem that gets blown up gets a stronger lift toward the Seventh Heaven than he could reasonably expect if he died with his feet on the ground. Again: One who is blown up to-day will not be blown up to-morrow; and is entirely relieved of any fear of accident. But it makes no difference. Neither you, nor I, nor any other person, ought to complain either of Allah or the black powder."

"Let us go!" said Boabdil, and they turned from the contemplation of the smoking ruin, to seek safety they knew not where.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO TO A DOZEN.

The question now arose, which way to direct their flight. The Knight of the Red Cross, being unacquainted with the country, felt himself incompetent to advise, while Ali made numerous suggestions, none of which seemed worthy of attention. When the wisdom of each was exhausted, the Princess hinted her wish that Ahab, who throughout the discussion had maintained absolute silence, be consulted. The eccentric youth was therefore appealed to. He was not in the least put to it for an answer.

"There are places in these mountains where you might hide the armies of the Christian king, if one could but stumble upon them. I believe I know the dwelling of a persecuted Jew, which will be just the thing we want. I chanced to discover it by accident, and have kept my and his secret ever since. If it be your highness's will that I lead you thither, you have only to say so. He may receive you in a friendly manner, or perchance he may betray you to one you know of, and whom, by the aid of my tongue, my new master knows of—the bloody-minded, cruel, unnatural, restless old king of Granada!"

Both Boabdil and his sister for a moment appeared greatly troubled and perplexed. The first, too, was angry with the wayward Ahab, while the latter manifested alarm and embarrassment.

"My brother," she said, "no secrets can be kept from this inquisitive and sharp-witted boy. Were it not for his uniform faithfulness, I should fear to trust him."

"Glorious-eyed beauty," quoth Ahab, "divinely-tempered princess Ahab, by the will of God, will serve you till your brother is seated on the throne of Granada! You can doubt me, or you can trust me. It's all the same!"

"Unfortunate prince and princess," said Mornay, with the most profound respect, "regret not that I am the possessor of your history. I have heard of the cruel conduct of your father, Muley Ben Hassan, who,

darkened by superstition and groundless misapprehension, decreed to slay his own offspring, to thwart a mischievous and idle prediction. I know that La Horra, 'the chaste', with her son, Mahomet Abdallah, generally called Boabdil, were confined in the tower of Comares, one of the most notable of the many similar structures of the Alhambra. The King was baffled in his intentions to annul the truth of the prophecy with the sword—frustrated by the devotion of the mother. A trusty servant received private directions to wait below the Alhambra at the hour of midnight, near the river Darro, with an Arabian courser fleet as the wind. The slighted and wronged sultana awaited, with all the tender trepidations of a mother's soul, till silence and darkness brooded over the palace; then, knotting together the scarfs, shawls, and veils of herself and attendants, she lowered the unlucky prince from the tower of Comares with singular success, when he made his escape on the horse that had been provided by her forethought. But I must confess that I never received the least knowledge of, or was led to believe, that a youthful princess shared his flight."

"The story, so far as you have related it," answered Boabdil, in a pensive voice, "is wonderfully correct. Though it be not universally known that a sister shared my dangerous deliverance, and subsequent exile and persecution, such was the case. Since you are aware of our identity and misfortunes, I have no doubt but I may confide entirely in your generosity, and that the secret will never be spoken to my detriment."

"On this cross, unhappy Prince," cried Sir Raoul, with emotion, "I swear to treat you as a friend and brother, and to do all in my power to restore you to your own! To the beautiful and accomplished Princess, your sister, I vow absolute obedience and faith; and were she a queen, she could not find among her subjects so devoted a slave as Raoul Mornay. My sword and my lance are hers; and, lest you should misunderstand me, I will add that I expect nothing in return, and no other reward than the consciousness of serving one so worthy of knightly fealty. In being her servant, I feel that I am more highly honored than in being the lord of a province."

When the Knight of the Red Cross ended this courteous declaration, he bent his dark plumes to the mane of his horse.

The Princess blushed deeply.

"It is a poor service, brave cavalier, to which you have thus magnanimously devoted your sword and lance. For the sake of your merit and deservings, I wish it were better; but it were ungraceful in me, even in my low estate, to refuse an arm so gallantly offered," answered Leoline, with mingled enthusiasm and timidity.

The black plumes of Mornay sank again to his steed's neck. Boabdil remained dejectedly silent.

"Fair Princess and mistress of my actions, I thank you most abundantly for your condescension," responded Mornay. "I will acknowledge no dominion but thine till thy brother sits on the throne of Granada."

"Alas, worthy Christian, I fear your bondage will be long!" The Princess spoke in a sweet and pensive voice, and sighed, and that sigh was echoed by Boabdil.

"Sir Raoul Mornay," said the latter, "you have devoted yourself to the fortunes of an unlucky Prince."

"Noble Boabdil, banish that accursed word from your thoughts! It is a miserable word, and breeds misfortune out of itself. Find but present security, and your name will by-and-by rally those around your standard who love your cause and person, and are dissatisfied with the reign and cruelties of your father."

The Knight of the Red Cross delivered himself of these thoughts with striking earnestness.

The Prince was touched.

"I confess," he said, "that your speech hath a wholesome and a natural sound; and, by the assistance of Allah, I will profit by it."

Just then Ahab pricked up to Mornay's side, and said:

"Something like a dozen horsemen are pursuing us, and their steeds seem fresh and sturdy. They come with lances in rest, and Damascus blades jingling at their sides."

"By St. Jago, it is true!" exclaimed Sir Raoul, casting his eyes downward toward

the luxuriant valley they had crossed but a half-hour before.

"Ah!" murmured Leoline, "a new danger has come, just as I was beginning to take heart."

"Fear not those who approach, sovereign lady of my sword and lance; for, by the help of the saints, the Prince and myself will speedily overthrow and put them to flight. In fact, I rejoice at an opportunity to fight under the eyes of her to whom I have vowed allegiance."

"A dozen to two is bad odds," said Ahab, phlegmatically; "and if they do not break those iron pots on your heads, it will be the strangest thing that has happened yet. For myself, I should rather trust to my heels than to those long spikes you carry with so much satisfaction."

"Trust in whatever you like," growled Ali, "and don't worry your betters by your impudence."

"Those horsemen," said Boabdil, "are excellently mounted, and follow at a swinging pace. I fear we shall not be able to get away from them."

"I would suggest," answered Mornay, "that Ahab and the other attendants go forward with your sister in the direction of the Jew's dwelling, while you and I keep at an easy distance behind, and, if necessary, show those fellows who come on so confidently the quality of our courage."

This proposition was at once acceded to, as presenting the best prospect for insuring the safety of Leoline; but before they had passed the crown of the eminence which they were ascending, the pursuers were within hailing-distance of Boabdil and Sir Raoul, and spurring up the acclivity at a sound rate.

"Halt, and reveal your purpose!" cried Mornay, raising his voice. "If you come on in this fashion, some of you will speedily bite the dust."

"Our business," answered the leader of the party, "is not with you so much as with the person beside you; therefore, if you would avoid injury, ride away quietly, for this matter concerns not you."

"On the contrary, you will soon discover that it concerns me much. Turn back, or prepare to meet us like true men. Let two of you ride forward and encounter us two," said Mornay.

"Think not we will be guilty of such folly! We will not lose the advantage of numbers."

"Your reply indicates that you are but mean-spirited and common varlets, unworthy to match a true knight in full course," returned Mornay, contemptuously.

"Parley not with the traitorous dogs!" said Boabdil. "I trust I may one day hang some of them from the towers of the Alhambra. Close your visor and have at them!"

The Knight of the Red Cross laid his long ashen lance in rest, commended himself to God and his mistress, and with her scarf fluttering over his dented armor, thundered down upon the Moorish horsemen like a great rock loosened from the mountain. The impatient horse shared the excitement of his master, and with his dark ears laid back, his eyes burning like coals, his nostrils distended, his mouth open, and his white teeth gleaming like ivory, he presented, when taken in conjunction with the imposing figure of his rider, an object that filled them with dismay. But one man of the twelve had courage enough to meet him, and he was stricken from his saddle as if he had been a shape of straw. Passing the discomfited Moor, he unseated another with his lance, overturned a third, both horse and rider, and then drawing his sword, laid about him in good earnest.

Boabdil, at that crisis, swept with great impetuosity into the midst of them, while they stood confounded, and did such execution that they were fain to turn and ignominiously fly. Mornay and the Prince pursued them to the foot of the hill, slaying several outright, and leaving but four in a condition to return to the Alhambra.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STONE CASTLE.

When Sir Raoul drew rein to return, the first object he saw was Leoline, waving her vail. To his chivalric heart, it was a welcome sight. He put spurs to his black steed and reached her long before Boabdil. He received her commendations with a modesty as great as his merits.

"I have seen many hard encounters," said

the gray-bearded Ali, "but never a victory more gallantly achieved. Happy is the lady fair who has thy loyal obedience in the keeping of her word and smile."

Mornay bowed gratefully to the old serving-man; his words were welcome, being spoken in the hearing of the queen of his heart.

"We must not forget, good Ali, that to the Prince, your master, we mainly owe the success of this passage-at-arms," said Sir Raoul.

"The brave," observed the Princess Leoline, "are always generous, and never overlook the deservings of others."

Boabdil now joined them, flushed with the warlike exercise, and elated at the result.

"Brother," said Leoline, "you have well merited the favor of lady bright, to speak in the phraseology of the Frank, and I regret that there is not some divine creature here to toss you her glove."

"If that divine creature had a hand half as small as yours, it would be of no sort of service to his worship, for he would not be able to wear it on his little finger; and I scarcely know what a thing is good for unless it can be worn or eaten," said Ahab, thinking he was called upon to express an opinion. "But," he added, "you had better not tarry here in complimentary discourse, which, to be plain, is of no account; but follow me as fast as you can."

Each, perceiving this to be sensible advice, was very willing to proceed; so they set forward, hoping for the best.

"Think you," asked Sir Raoul, when he had an opportunity of speaking privately with Ahab, "that we can rely, with any certainty, on the kindness of the Jew you have mentioned?"

"In regard to him, two things you may count on without doubt; he will receive you, or he will not. If he receives you civilly, you will be civilly received; if he turn you away uncivilly, you will be uncivilly turned away. And that is God's truth, if I ever spoke it."

"And what is your opinion, sage Ahab?" queried Mornay, who had learned how to humor the eccentricities of the Moorish youth.

"It is this: if he will not admit us willingly, we will find a way to make him change his mind. It were no hard matter to batter in his door, or smoke him and his daughter out of his stone palace, like foxes out of their hole. After we get hold of him, a taste of the bastinado will no more than pay him for his churlishness. But whether he refuse or comply, submit or remain obstinate, fall on our necks and kiss us, or drive us away with Israelitish hounds, it is all the same!"

"You spoke of a stone palace. What meant you by that?"

"You must know that these mountains have been inhabited by many races of men; and there are to be found among them ancient castles and curious excavations, erected and wrought by nobody knows whom. There are often found vast chambers cut in solid rock, that have more the seeming of subterranean palaces than anything else. And my bearded Jew, Sadoc, burrows in one of these, so ingeniously contrived that both air and light are freely admitted."

"You spoke, also, of a daughter?"

"I did, most valorous; and you may go far before you will find such another bit of Israelitish beauty. But as my taste runs, I am as well satisfied with Nicolette, her handmaiden," replied Ahab, with extreme complacence.

"I think I see what turns the weather-vane," said Sir Raoul, smiling. "You made good use of your time, doubtless, when you had access to this Nicolette?"

"I can't deny but I practiced my best graces, and showed my wit to the best advantage; and I flatter myself that, when I undertake to be agreeable, nobody in the world can come within a mile of me. Knowing that I shall win or lose, I give myself no uneasiness about the result, certain that I shall die at just the same identical moment in either case. No damsel, though never so pretty, ever kept a man from dying. Woman can produce heartaches and manifold other diseases, but I'll be blamed if she can cure the simplest complaint, except hunger."

"How far is it to the stone palace of Sadoc?"

"I cannot tell. I think we might reach it in three hours, with moderate traveling."

Sir Raoul had too much good sense to press

his company much upon Leoline. Sometimes he rode in advance, close to their guide, Ahab; at others, dropped behind; but never, unless addressed by Boabdil, placed himself near the Princess; and when he ventured to do so, exercised such judgment and delicacy, that she could not help being flattered by his discretion. In this way, he imperceptibly gained an advantage over her, a woman always being ready to grant those little attentions which cost her no effort, yet give much pleasure, providing they are not abused and misconstrued by masculine vanity. In short, the Knight of the Red Cross was making good progress in the esteem of Leoline, though not perhaps sensible of the fact.

They continued their flight without further interruption until two hours after sunrise, when they entered a very mountainous and rocky region, where they curved and wound about strangely through passes and defiles.

They came, at length, to a narrow yet verdant ravine, through which trickled musically a small stream of water, a thousand wild flowers drawing nourishment from its moisture, giving it perfume in return. Crossing this, a mountain of rock defied their further progress.

"We have finished our journey," said Ahab. "We have arrived at the stone palace of Sadoc, the Jew."

"I see no palace of any kind!" growled Ali.

"Nor would one of your dullness ever discover it," replied Ahab. "Horseflesh, my masters, can go no further."

Ahab, the Witty, sprang to the ground and passed between the large rocks, separated just enough to allow a convenient passage, and then ran up what appeared to be natural steps in the nearly perpendicular side of the mountain. He leaped nimbly from step to step like a goat.

This proceeding was watched with interest by those who had trusted to his fidelity, and whose safety depended so much upon the event.

Ahab stood presently on a small shelf, which seemed to owe nothing to the art of man for its peculiar shape. Picking up a small stone, he struck several distinct blows on the rock, which on that side formed nearly the entire face of the mountain. The utmost silence followed this knocking. Old Ali muttered, and Boabdil showed signs of impatience. Nothing discouraged, Ahab let fly his blows again with increased vigor.

"Let him thump!" said Ali, "and that is all the good it'll do. Perhaps he expects the mountain to open, and an enchanted palace to appear!"

This sneer had scarcely died on the grumbler's lips, when a voice responded from the interior of the rock, with a peculiarly muffled and hollow sound.

"Who disturbs me," it said, "at my morning prayers?"

"It is a friend that knocks," answered Ahab.

"Who taught you the signal?"

"One of your own household, worthy Sadoc. Remember you not my voice?"

"I know nobody's voice. Go away, whoever you are, and vex not one who has renounced the world and all its vanities," replied Sadoc, in a querulous tone.

"Not so, pious Israelite. You have with you a daughter and a maiden; and daughters and maidens are the greatest vanities in the world. I am Ahab, the youth who chanced once to do you a friendly turn, and discovered also your retreat."

"Are you alone?" asked Sadoc, cautiously.

"I cannot say that I am; but I am so near alone that there are but six with me, all told."

"Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! What do the young heathen say? Do my ears deceive me? Begone, you whelp of idolatry! I have no entertainment for sojourners within my narrow cell."

"We'll see about that!" retorted Ahab. "I have a bag of a certain black powder with me, which, if crammed into the crevices of thy door, and set on fire, will blow you smack into the bosom of Abraham."

"God of my fathers!" groaned Sadoc. "When will our persecutions cease?"

"When you open the door," answered Ahab, practically. "But lest you should not, I will be stuffing in that same black powder I mentioned."

"Of what degree are those with you?"

"Of any or all degrees, just as it may best suit you. But I can tell you that they are many degrees impatient at your delay. Also, that there is a lady among them more beautiful than your daughter Salome, who stands much in need of rest and refreshment."

"I am afraid, importunate stripling, to admit strangers within my gates. It is a time of persecution and distress among my people. We know not how to distinguish friend from foe. Our confidence is often abused, and our faith tampered with. Our wives and our daughters are like lambs in the midst of wolves. Our slow and painful accumulations are unjustly wrested from us, and we have no city nor abiding-place on the earth."

"All of which," answered Ahab, "has nothing to do with the subject. I swear by the Prophet that you shall not be harmed by those I bring. They are as hunted and miserable as ever was a descendant of Israel. They want neither your gold, nor your daughter, nor your life, nor your faith. They will bring a blessing and not a curse."

"Stop one moment, young heathen, while I look at them. I would see in what array they come."

"Let your observations be short, or the rocks will soon be tumbling about your head."

"I see," said Sadoc; and his voice came from a greater distance than before; "two cavaliers in full armor, with dreadful spears in their hands, and swords girt at their loins, bestriding mighty beasts of war. My heart misgives me, young Ahab! I am betrayed into the hands of men of blood, that do battle with carnal weapons."

At this stage of affairs, Sir Raoul, losing all patience, cried out:

"In the name of the Holy Patriarchs, old man, cast aside your cowardly fears, and give shelter, if in your power, to a fair lady in distress. Refuse a request so reasonable, and I swear by those Books of the Law which you profess to revere, to enter your rocky fortress by force!"

"The will of God be done!" muttered Sadoc; and presently he was seen standing on the shelf beside Ahab.

Sir Raoul dismounted and assisted Leoline to alight, when Boabdil, taking her in his arms, bore her carefully up the irregular steps to the now open door of the stone chambers of Sadoc, where, to his infinite amazement, he was met by a maiden of such rare perfections, that pages might be written in praise of her beauty. It was Salome, the daughter of the Jew.

In stature she was about the size of Leoline, but her beauty was of that dark, rich character common alike to the Jewess and the daughters of Spain. The contour of her face much resembled that of the Princess, but the deeper complexion imparted to it a different expression. Her eyes were large and lustrous; her brows heavy, and delicately penciled; while her black hair graced her magnificent head like a crown. But it was not her person only that surprised Boabdil, the loftiness of her air impressed him at once.

He surrendered his sister to this lovely girl without hesitation or distrust. The two looked at each other for a moment, and experienced equal surprise and admiration.

"Father," said Salome, "attend to these strangers, while I bestow such care on this maiden as her fatigues and condition require."

"It shall be so, my daughter, though the God of Abraham knows only what will come of it." Then to Sir Raoul and Boabdil, "Gentle Sirs, let your servants disencumber your horses, and they will find excellent forage in the Valley of the Running Brook. It is not in my power to entertain persons of your seeming in a becoming fashion; but I furnish out of my poverty all that I may."

"No apologies, good Sadoc," replied the Prince. "We have to excuse ourselves to you for the rudeness which forced upon you unexpected and unwelcome guests."

"Like the foxes, we are compelled to dwell in holes and dens, in caves and clefts of the rocks. Both Moor and Spaniard are our enemies. We are tried off and sorely. Our old men and our young perish by the edge of the sword. Marvel not, then, gentle Sirs, that I gave you reluctant admission to my only place of safety on earth."

"I know your wrongs," answered Boabdil, "and were I King of Spain or Granada, I would quickly redress them. Fear not, old

man, that I will ill requite your hospitality, or lightly betray the secret of your abode."

"Thanks, gracious Moor," said Sadoc, following Salome, who was aiding Leoline both by her arm and cheering words, farther into the mysteries of the stone palace. Sir Raoul and the Prince were impressed at every step with its vastness, and freely expressed their wonder that human hands should have wrought such a habitation in the unyielding rock. Near the entrance it was dimly lighted; but as they proceeded the light grew clear, soft, yet intense. On the right and left were rows of columns skillfully fashioned and ornamented with antique devices. The roof was fretted with similar chiselings, while the handiwork of the floor was equally astonishing.

"God is great," said Boabdil, "and man inherits a portion of his strength and wisdom. The Alhambra itself cannot boast of architectural labor like this."

"Hast been there, noble Sir?" asked Sadoc, quickly.

Boabdil smiled that strange, sweet, characteristic smile, and replied, with a sigh:

"Sadoc, I have been there!"

Struck by the answer, or not perhaps so much by the answer itself as the air with which it was given, the Jew glanced inquisitively at his guest.

CHAPTER X.

SALOME.

Sadoc, the Jew, was a man past middle age, a great deal bowed and beaten down by his warfare with the world. He was one who, clearly, had experienced his share of injury and proscription; for he had lived in those fanatical times when the Israelite was despised alike by the Spaniard and the Moor, when he had no security for life or property, or the safety of wife or daughter. The dreadful persecutions of this wandering and tempest-tossed people form a melancholy and deplorable page in the archives of history.

Sadoc was meanly clad, and had continually an anxious and unassured demeanor. His nose was large and sharp, his lips thin and avaricious in expression, his chin rather prominent, his eyes small, cunning, and ever vigilant. His forehead was like the glacié of a wall, retreating to his crown, which was bare, while the scattering locks around it were gray.

Nothing seemed to escape the restless vision of Sadoc. Wherever wandered the eyes of the strangers, there went his. He liked neither their surprise nor admiration of his stone castle. He secretly preferred that they would walk on without noticing either column or capitol, fretted ceiling or polished floor, sculptured wall or great marble basins into which trickled diminutive streams of crystal water.

"All this," said Sadoc, "is cold and comfortless. It chills the heart, and makes one long for the warmth and cheerfulness of sunlight and cities. It is all that is left to a miserable descendant of Jacob."

"Not so bad a heritage as one might find," observed Mornay. "You have here both dryness and air, and many princes of the earth inhabit a less costly habitation. But we have not seen all of it yet, I imagine?"

"All that is worth seeing," said Sadoc, hastily. Yet a little farther on, we shall come to a chamber much smaller than this pillared vestibule, which is provided with a very few of the comforts and necessities of life."

"He tells not all," whispered Ahab to Sir Raoul.

Arrived at the chamber spoken of by the Jew, Boabdil looked around for Leoline and Salome, but they were not to be seen; they had disappeared in some deeper recess. The apartment into which Raoul and the Moor were ushered was not large, though the ceiling was lofty. Like the main entrance, it beamed with a soft light which streamed from many lamps that hung from the wall in bronze sockets. The hardness and coldness of the floor was relieved by soft mats. Couches on which to sit or recline were appropriately placed near a fire, which blazed steadily within the arc of a fluted column standing against and a part of the solid wall. From whence this mysterious fire derived sustenance, neither Boabdil nor Mornay could divine; they saw it flaming with a constant brightness, as if a magician had worked it from some hidden fountain of fire beneath.

Boabdil could not help thinking of astrologers, soothsayers, and cabalists. The whole reminded him of that prediction which had been so baneful in its influence.

Two of the servants had remained with the horses; but Ali, imitating the example of Ahab, followed them. These two now relieved the knights of their armor; an operation which Sadoc eyed with covert contempt.

"Father Sadoc," said Ahab, as he carefully deposited his master's armor in a niche, "the horses of noble knights differ very materially from those paltry hacks ridden by peasants and Israelites. The splendid chargers of these cavaliers, who are flowers of knight-errantry, are worth, at the very least, their weight in gold, with a diamond or two about the size of a peacock's egg thrown in; and consequently must not herd with common brutes. Methinks a castle like this would be incomplete without some accommodation for horses; and if one were to look sharply, he might discover a score of your own as nicely stabled and fed as ever quadruped was."

"Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!" cried Sadoc, raising his withered hands.

"I know not what gods those be you mention, and care less; but I do pray of you to have some compassion on those surperb Andalusian steeds, which have within a few hours borne those iron pots that you see there, and those long poles with iron heads, and all that other iron, at a speed most incredible, against upward of a dozen enemies, to their utter discomforture, destruction, and defeat."

While Sadoc was framing an answer, a young girl tripped in. Ahab instantly greeted her. She blushed, and appeared nothing loth to see him.

"My masters," he said, "this is Nicolette. The Prophet has granted me to see her before; or it might have been Satan. But it is all the same!" He looked slyly at his new master. "Nicolette," he added, "thou art the prettiest girl in Granada, of which I will tell thee more anon. The thing now in hand is, that your master desires you, without delay, to show me the way to the stables."

The effrontery of Ahab so confounded Sadoc, that his tongue utterly refused to make protest or remonstrance. Nicolette looked at him, and either willfully or really mistook his silence for assent.

"With all my heart," said she, and set off with the lightness of a kid, followed by Ahab, whose conscience was so easily adapted to his soul, that if he carried a point, he gave himself no uneasiness about the way in which it was accomplished.

The stables to which the damsel led him were as curiously contrived as the castle itself; for the mountain, with its steep sides, and long spires of stone, and towering crags, naturally suggested the idea of a gigantic castle. Entering this stone stable by a massive door, overgrown on the outside with moss, and opening by a simple adjustment of levers, Ahab was struck nearly breathless with surprise at beholding a stud of twenty horses.

"Your master need never go on foot," he said, quietly, for the emotion of wonder never lasted him more than half a minute. "Inform me, fair Nicolette, why he keeps so many fine animals?"

"I know not," answered the girl, "and if I did I would not tell you."

"Perhaps," continued Ahab, while the servants led in the horses, "he bargains with those who are obliged to part with valuable beasts. Perchance he is a horse-dealer? But the devil himself could not find him, if he wanted a horse ever so bad. This is a mystery. I shall solve it, or I shall not. What is the odds?" Then to the servants: "Bring in all the poor brutes, and do not be afraid that you shall treat them too well. There is room enough and provender enough, too, I'll warrant."

It was now Nicolette's turn to gratify her curiosity.

"Who are these," she asked, "that you have brought with you?"

"One is Ali, one is Jakob, and—"

"If you are going to talk like a fool, stop where you are; for I care not a straw for your Alis and your Jakobs. Who are those fine cavaliers?" said Nicolette, with a toss of her pretty head.

"A couple of kings that I picked up on the road, and am going to take care of till I can get thrones for them. That is all and every—"

thing they are. Give me a kiss, Nicolette."

"A kiss is what you never had from me, and what you are not likely to get soon, if you do not discourse in a better fashion. Kings are not as plenty as pomegranates, that you can find them by the wayside, at every turn. Come, I will have it out of you."

"Press me not to the wall, sweet Nicolette! One of the knights is my master, nominated and elected to that honor by my own dear self. I serve him whether he will or otherwise; for I make it a rule to follow every fancy that come up. The other, my love, is a melancholy Moor, a wine-dealer, who has either lost a great quantity of wine or his sweetheart; but it makes no odds."

"A falsehood on the face of it!" returned Nicolette, pettishly. "But a breath ago you called them both knights, and knights were never wine-dealers in the world, nor can you make me believe so absurd a tale."

"The wine-dealer part was a slip of the tongue, or perchance an embellishment of my own. That he is an unhappy knight, is true; if you can learn more of him than that, you are welcome. With the exception of one little girl that I know his sister is the most beautiful maiden I ever beheld."

Ahab ogled Nicolette in a fashion that gave her to understand that she was that identical little girl.

"I can bring you a damsel," retorted Nicolette, contemptuously, "that, in the matter of beauty, as much surpasses your Moorish lady as the sun surpasses the moon!"

While Ahab and Nicolette were thus entertaining themselves, Boabdil was scanning every passage and watching every movement, hoping that he should presently see the Jewess return. When considerable time had passed, and there were no signs of his desire being gratified, he began to inquire about his sister, and expressed a wish to see her immediately.

Sadoc left them to communicate his pleasure, and after a short lapse came back with his daughter, with an expression moody and dissatisfied.

The Prince arose at her approach.

"Do her not so much honor, noble Sir," said the Israelite, contracting his heavy brows. "Salome is but lowly born, and beneath your worship's notice."

The Moor made no response to this observation. He had seen the beauties of the Alhambra and fair women from other lands; but none ever charmed his eyes or touched his imagination as this Jewess had insensibly done. She stood in his presence, not as an inferior, but with the prestige of a princess. Not that there was any pretence in her manner, but the natural and spontaneous outflow of her character and quality imparted to her this regal dignity. Grace, modesty, and lofty pride were so blended in her person and air, that it was impossible not to admire and respect her.

Boabdil felt that he should lose another throne or gain something of more value. Before Salome had opened her lips to speak, the Moorish Prince had surrendered the palace of his heart, with all the riches it contained. She spoke; she said something of his sister, he scarcely comprehended what. He thought, however, that he was bidden to follow her, that Sadoc remonstrated, and that she, with a few calm words, conquered his objections. He walked behind her, in a singular state of incredulity and bewilderment. He passed numberless objects, curious and rare, without giving them a second thought. The most exquisite creation of the palace of Sadoc was before him, moving in grace and beauty. He walked on in his new dream, and stopped, at length, where everything seemed to exhale a perfumed air.

A balmy odor filled his nostrils and soothed his senses. Recalling his wandering faculties, he perceived that he had entered the bower of lady. He discovered his sister reclining on a luxuriant couch at the extremity of the apartment. The walls were hung with the richest crimson drapery, and the floor covered with a carpet of velvet, soft and yielding to the tread. In no direction could he turn his eyes without observing evidences of refinement and wealth, for which he was quite unprepared. On a table of elaborate workmanship were drinking-vessels of gold and silver. The tasteful and unique designs and arrangement of the silver lamps that poured a mellow flood of light and fragrance into this fairy chamber did not escape the searching yet hurried examination that he

made before advancing to address his sister. Aroused, anon, by the sound of her voice, he crossed this marvelous bower, and seated himself on a cushion at the feet of Leoline.

CHAPTER XI.

THE KING OF GRANADA.

Muley Aben Hassan, King of Granada, was seated on a magnificent divan, in the Hall of Embassadors, with the officers of his court about him. He was a sovereign injured to war, and one who had made his name terrible to the Christians. He was skillful and crafty, plotting and pitiless. He had grown grim and gray in power and in contesting and keeping a throne ever difficult to possess in peace and safety.

At the time at which we have chosen to introduce him, there was a cloud on his brow, and a stern purpose in his hard, blue eyes. He said to an attendant, without moving his head:

"Bring hither that English knight who professes to come from King Ferdinand on important business."

He uttered not another word, and kept his eyes fixed on the floor till the messenger came back, followed by Sir Raoul Mornay, who, bowing somewhat haughtily to the King, stood waiting to be addressed. But the old monarch was in no haste to do so. He surveyed leisurely, and withal contemptuously, the Knight of the Red Cross, who bore the ordeal with perfect tranquillity.

"Sir Raoul," he began, presently, "I have looked over those dispatches from Ferdinand of Spain, of which you are said to be the bearer. I find by the date that you have been long on the way."

The King fixed his keen eyes on Mornay.

"Your Majesty is right," replied the latter. "Various accidents have obstructed my journey; the first and most fatal of which was an encounter with a band of Moslem outlaws, who mortally wounded Don Juan de Vera, who set out with those important papers, and scattered his retinue. The office of delivering the dispatches to your Majesty was then intrusted to me by the dying knight, and I have made my way alone through an enemy's country to the foot of your throne."

"You must have met with many adventures during that time?" said the King, questioningly.

"A number, your Majesty," answered Sir Raoul, not quite so much at ease.

"I'll be sworn you found in your wanderings some of those famous old towers, the architecture of which is by many attributed to the Romans?"

"I observed many castles and ancient fortresses perched on the summits of cliffs and mountains; but I did not consider it expedient to visit them. But, since the main object of my efforts is accomplished, and I am here in your presence, I wait your Majesty's answer to the demands of my royal master, Ferdinand of Spain."

"You have let out the truth, at last!" cried the King of Granada, angrily. "You have spoken of the demands of Ferdinand! Ay, and demands they are—demands of a most insulting and shameful kind. We will give your master neither slaves nor dollars, but Moorish cimeters and Moorish lances! If he will receive this kind of tribute, we will go half way to offer it, and every cimeter and every lance-head shall be borne by a Moslem warrior!"

Sir Raoul bowed gravely.

"Is this the message," he asked, "that the King of Granada wishes me to bear to the King of Spain?"

"It is the answer that I shall send; but it is known only to the Prophet who will carry it."

The officers of the court looked at each other significantly. An anomalous smile played on the features of Muley Aben Hassan.

"Your Majesty can depute whom you will for this mission; but it is usual for the ambassador to bear back to his sovereign the proper answer to the missives which he has had the honor to receive and truly deliver. If your Majesty intends to depart from this usage, I must of necessity submit, although I protest against the innovation," answered the knight, with stately gravity.

"Perhaps I may choose to reply to his insulting demand by the taking of a town or the sack of a city. At any rate, I will not be dictated to by an unbelieving Christian."

The Moorish King scowled, and twirled his beard fiercely.

Sir Raoul drew himself up more proudly, and cast back the defiant and threatening glances of the courtiers. He remembered the prophecy of Ahab, to the effect that he would find it easier to get into the Alhambra than to get out. He read danger in the circle of dark warriors that stood around him; but he saw not one among them that had power to make him quail, or that he would not have been willing to meet, on foot or on horse, with sword or lance, battle-axe or mace.

"I am called after that order that kept the Temple, and guarded pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulchre. I wear the Red Cross, and am ready to do battle for the true religion. If there be any here who doubt my valor, I will meet such in the tented field, in the name of God and my sovereign lady."

Sir Raoul drew off his mailed glove, and cast it upon the floor of the Hall of Embassadors.

A stern silence followed this bold challenge. Anon, a tall, haughty Moor stepped forward to pick up the gage.

"Hold!" cried the King. "I have myself cause of quarrel with this Christian knight. If, when I have done with him, he has the same mind and ability to meet you in mortal combat, you shall be free to accept the offer." Then, turning fiercely to Mornay, he added: "Tell me, Sir Knight, whether you did or did not pass some time at an abandoned fortress known as the Vermilion Tower?"

"He who is worthy to wear the Red Cross is above falsehood or prevarication," replied Mornay, without hesitation or fear. "I did pass a night and a day at the place you have named. Thirsty and hungry, weary and lost, with my steed spent beneath me, I was most willing to seek rest, food, forage, and shelter therein, as any other wayfarer would have done in a similar strait."

"Mark well this concession, my nobles! El Zagal, are you listening?" He cast his eyes at the tall, swarthy officer who had stooped to take up Sir Raoul's gage.

"Sire, I have heard the words of this haughty Christian," he replied, with a dark look at Mornay.

"Whom saw you at Vermilion Tower?" continued the King.

"I came not hither," cried Sir Raoul, indignantly, "to be questioned on any matter foreign to my mission. I am not a witness, but an ambassador, and, while I am here, represent the majesty of Ferdinand."

There was an angry murmur among the courtiers.

"Reflect, cholerick knight! Be not over hasty in your temper. You will presently learn that I have small respect for you or your King. If you would return to Spain, be somewhat more moderate in your replies, and less punctilious about points of honor."

Hassan stroked his long beard, and struggled to conceal his chagrin.

"There was one in that tower," he went on, his voice shaking in spite of his iron will, "in whose fate the glorious kingdom of Granada is involved. I am not speaking for myself, but for my people. I have striven with my heart, and if I have not mastered, I have risen above its affections. My life draws toward its evening, and it matters not, so far as my individual self is concerned, how soon I rest with my fathers. But I love Granada, and would save it from the rule of one who would betray it to the unbeliever. Were it not for this prediction, I would descend from my throne, and with joy relinquish it to Boabdil. Such, however, is not my intention. I will save Granada!"

Hassan paused, and for a moment bowed his gray head. A solemn silence prevailed in the Hall of Embassadors. No one dared speak. It was seldom that the lion-souled King displayed emotion. The English knight, only, maintained his composure, and he alone had courage to address the monarch.

"Let the instincts of the father rise superior to the sacrilege and impiety of superstition," he said. "Cast from you the trammels of credulity, and put to the sword all astrologers, soothsayers, and magicians in your kingdom. Recall your brave and noble son from his persecuted exile, and seat him at your right hand. Do this," continued Sir Raoul, raising his hand, and delivering his thoughts with great fluency and force, "or the execrations of all good men and women will follow you to the tomb, and outlive your glory and fame!"

Every officer and warrior trembled at the

audacity of the ambassador of the Castilian crown. El Zagal expected to receive an order for his instant death.

The King raised himself slowly and painfully, as if he wrestled with an unseen burden too heavy to bear. There was a certain wildness in his expression, and his blue eyes for a moment did not become fixed upon any object, but wandered vacantly about the sumptuous apartment. Several Damascus blades were half drawn from their scabbards, but went quietly back when their masters saw the visage of Hassan. Some of these fiery courtiers were of the proud race of the Abencerrages.

"There are seasons, my Lords," said the King, presently, in a hollow voice, "when the weaknesses of our earthly and mortal composition obtain a temporary ascendancy over the stern duties of the sovereign. But, by the blessing of Allah, you have seen this for the last time. I am resolved, as ever, that the sword shall give the lie to seer and prophet, and Granada shall stand!"

Instantly the temporary mildness of his countenance passed away. The fierce gleam returned to his eyes and the cruel firmness to his lips.

"Guards," he exclaimed, "take away this Christian dog, and cast him into the deepest dungeon of the Alhambra! Were he a hundred times an ambassador, and a hundred times a knight of the Red Cross, I would teach him a humbler port and a more becoming reverence when he stands in the presence of a crowned king! Away with him!"

Muley Aben Hassan stamped impatiently upon the floor, and the guards, closing hastily about Sir Raoul, hurried him hastily from the presence of the king.

CHAPTER XII.

A PROPHECY OF EVIL.

It has been seen by the foregoing chapter that Sir Raoul, faithful to his trust, after seeing Boabdil and his sister in a place of safety, visited the Alhambra and presented those important missives which he had received from the expiring Don Juan de Vera; also what befell him when he went to receive Hassan's answer.

After being dragged from the Hall of Ambassadors, he was deprived of his arms and armor, and, with much insult and abuse, conveyed to one of the dungeons of the tower of Comares, where he was left to reflect on the vicissitudes of fortune. He regretted that he had not listened to the counsel of Boabdil, who had painted to him, in faithful colors, the danger of the enterprise; not the least of the peril arising from the fact that he had been seen by the Moslem soldiers and Abaddon, the magician, at the Vermilion Tower, aiding one whose death was resolved on by the hard-hearted monarch. But it was one of the rules of knight-hood never to complain of bodily pain or injuries that could not be helped. Instead of leaving his loaf of bread and pitcher of water untasted, he ate of the one and drank of the other, deeming it his duty to preserve health and life as long as practicable.

His dungeon was entirely dark; he could not see the nearest object, and even his stale loaf and earthen pitcher had to be groped for when wanted. It was as lonely and discouraging a situation as man could be placed in; and knowing the implacable temper of Hassan, he had little to expect, either from his justice or his mercy.

The image of the Princess, however, comforted him in his reverses. Her beauty now became more exalted in his imagination than when he had occasional access to her presence; so much does absence enhance the value of what is beloved. He still retained her scarf, which he had concealed beneath his armor before obtaining audience of the King, and taking it from his bosom, pressed it to his lips as if it had been the relic of a saint.

About midnight of the night following his incarceration, he was awakened from his first sleep by a stream of light falling upon his eyes. Looking at the grated window, he beheld the face of Abaddon, and also the curious coiled lamp that he had before seen carried by the hand of Zegrin. He was not a little startled at these appearances, but soon recovered his tranquillity.

"Begone!" exclaimed Sir Raoul, recalling the events of their last meeting. "I would witness no more of your jugglery. Of your

treachery and your villainy I have already ample proof."

"Christian warrior," said Abaddon, with serenity, "thou hast as little faith in my art as in my truth. A person, however humble, may be a useful friend or a dangerous enemy."

"He who deceives in one thing will not scruple about deceiving in another. He who lies about the stars and stoops to the nether world for knowledge of the providences of God, never can commend himself to my confidence and judgment. Had not my plate-mail been of trusty temper and honest make, the ball from your matchlock would have ended alike my aspirations and my existence," answered Mornay, without the least exhibition of temper.

"Nay, Sir Knight, I discharged no matchlock," said Abaddon.

"It matters not, old man, whether your own hand sped the messenger or the hand of an accomplice or subordinate; the act was in truth yours. Pass on with your rod, your book, your astrolabe, and your vile-looking lamp, and leave me to the repose of an honest man."

"Hast thou so much time that thou canst afford to waste a part of it in sleep?" asked Abaddon, with a sinister expression.

"God only knows how much I may have, but I will make the most of it while it lasts. What is your business here?"

"I am sent by the King to cast your horoscope."

"The King troubles himself unnecessarily. I disbelieve in your art, and care to know no more of the future than Heaven may deign to reveal by dream or vision, or sudden enlightenment of the mind. I care not to step out of the natural circle of my life to search into mysteries that concern me not," replied the knight, with solemnity.

"All that affects not the supreme will of the King."

With that, Abaddon unlocked the door, and, attended by Zegrin, entered the prison without apparent fear or hesitation.

"Your confidence is great, old man. How know you but I will seize you by the throat and strangle you? I hold your life as surely in my hand as if I had sword and dagger. Thy wrinkled flesh would crumble like parchment in my grasp."

Mornay looked penetratingly at Abaddon, whose calm, blue eyes met the scrutiny unmoved.

"Thou wilt not harm me," he said, quietly, while Zegrin brought in a small table, inscribed all over at the top with singular shapes and cabalistic characters. On this magic table he placed his iron-clasped book.

"I know not that," answered Mornay. "Be not too certain. Consult now your gods and see what death you will die."

There was an uneasy and transient sinking of the magician's eyes. He governed himself and said:

"To know my own fate is the only thing denied to my sublime art. I can no more solve the mystery of my own life and death than I can lift myself by clasping my knees. Seest thou not, O Christian, that knowledge hath its beginning and its end, and that there are set bounds to the powers of man?"

Abaddon raised his eyes, and for a moment appeared lost in contemplation of divine mysteries.

"I have," he added, anon, "somewhat examined the predestinated pathway of thy course. I have passed a night in abstruse calculations and awful converse with the spirits of mid-air, and the spirits of nether earth; and both the stars and spirits agree that thou art near the most critical period of thy life."

"I could have told you that and save you a night's vigil, and all that communion with the planets and the occult inhabitants of air and Hades. You see before you a Christian knight, who fears not death, when met in the career of honor, and received in the discharge of supposed duty. You have revealed nothing I did not know."

Sir Raoul smiled. Abaddon was disconcerted.

"Thou art too hasty at conclusions," resumed the latter. "Death is the common penalty of mankind, but there are different methods of canceling the debt. Some pass away with ease and serenity, others go with lingering agony and inexpressible wrenches

of pain, that add thousand-fold to the common horrors of dissolution.

Abaddon stole a searching glance at the knight.

"Old man," exclaimed Mornay, laying his hand suddenly upon his arm, "disguise not your meaning in such artful and cunningly-chosen verbiage! Speak out at once, and say that your master and sovereign, the cruel and crafty, has sent you to threaten me with torture and the horrible engines of his wrath. Go back, and say to him that I am a Christian knight, and will be torn in pieces, dragged joint from joint, and die by protracted and devilish ingenuities, rather than compromise my honor or betray his son!"

"These words would sound well in a romance for women; but from men, who know the mutations of life and the power of kings, they are foolhardy and arrogant. No one cares to die, however much he may vaunt of his courage. Humble yourself before Hassan, confess your error in aiding a traitor to escape, make known his place of concealment, and you may yet live to do many knightly actions," said the magician.

Zegrin, who had been mute and attentive, now spoke in his soft and feminine voice:

"My great master, Abaddon, is reputed very wise. Do not scorn his advice or discredit his prophecies. He is not that kind of magician that prates of things whereof he is not certain. If he inform you you will be beheaded at dawn, at dawn you will be headless. If he predict for you the torture-chamber, be assured that you will become acquainted with its dreadful engines."

Sir Raoul, impressed by the voice and manner of the youth, watched him attentively while he was speaking.

"Zegrin," answered the knight, curling his lip, "another garb might become your person as well!"

Zegrin depressed his gaze to the floor, but did not change color.

"With the brows, and hair, and eyes, and voice of a woman, the apparel of one would not ill befit you."

Zegrin's cheeks flushed slightly. Abaddon frowned and exhibited some annoyance.

"Turn, O Christian, thy thoughts from vanities," he said. "To thee it is of the least importance whether Zegrin be a boy or a damsel. Call him what he seems, and what his name indicates. He hath a gentle port, but his soul is courageous, and equal to the mysteries of my art. Receive the parting admonitions of an old man, or I swear by the bones of the Prophet, that thou wilt miserably perish! Say to the king or his servants, 'I will deliver Boabdil into your hands.'"

"You know me not! To me life is secondary to honor. The mistress of my heart would love me better dead than living, if I fell gloriously on the field of battle, whence brave men should not fly."

Abaddon appeared at a loss for an answer to this manly and chivalrous speech. His eyes fell on the scarf which Mornay had partially thrust into his bosom.

"What frippery is that?" he demanded. Then to the youth: "Zegrin, what thinkest thou of that gay bit of stuff trailing from the knight's doublet?"

"It is the favor of his lady," he replied, hesitatingly, evincing surprise.

"These Franks," muttered Abaddon, "are idolatrous! They make deities of their women. So infatuated are they, that they will often perish for a trumpery piece of cashmere like that."

"The Christian ladies must be happy!" sighed Zegrin. "But," he added, "that is not the gift of Christian maiden. Observe you not, great master, that there is a crescent embrodered upon it?"

Mornay examined the scarf, and noticed, what he had not before observed, a diminutive crescent wrought on one of its corners. He beheld this emblem with a feeling of secret sorrow; it reminded him that Leoline's faith differed from his own. Earnestly he besought heaven that the cross might at some time occupy the place of that infidel emblem.

"Dost thou love her who bestowed that favor?" asked Zegrin.

"I confess, before heaven and you, that I daily and hourly give her the best incense of my heart!" replied Sir Raoul, with an earnestness that made the youth start.

"The more need," said Abaddon, coldly, "that thou shouldst live." Taking up his book, he added, with a pitiless sneer: "One living knight is worth a dozen dead ones, and no maiden lives that will not forget the former for the latter. Sir Raoul Mornay, be wise! Life is the first great necessity of all things else, inasmuch as love, riches, and honor are predicated upon it. If you foolishly throw your life away, you not only obtain an eternal divorce from your lady-love, but bestow her upon another. In the world, live men love; in the grave, dead men rot!"

These were the parting words of Abaddon.

Again the book, the staff, the astrolabe, and the serpent-lamp vanished with their possessor.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE, LIFE, AND LIBERTY.

Men sleep in the deepest and most wretched prisons, and Mornay slept in his, dreaming not so much of the magician and his temptations as of Leoline and Boabdil. Some hours must have passed over him in his happy reprieve from wakefulness and mental suffering, before he was again called out of his elysium to face and feel the reality of his situation. The interruption that now occurred was one of the most unexpected and wonderful. The door of his prison was open, and a lady of dazzling beauty stood on the threshold.

Sir Raoul believed that he was beholding vision. Perhaps the Madonna herself had safed to appear for his comfort and consolation. So much was he affected by this fancy, that he could neither rise from his straw nor speak. He crossed himself devoutly, and waited to see what manner of salutation this would be. In those days, the most extravagant tales of miraculous interpositions were received as gospel-truth, and repeated for the strengthening of the weak and the confirmation of the strong.

The raiment of the lady served greatly to augment the illusion, for she seemed to float in a cloud of fleecy lace. The purity and whiteness of her complexion also imparted an ethereal cast to her features. Pale rays from a small silver lamp, borne in her left hand, creeping over her spotless brow, were sufficient to produce that halo which Sir Raoul was prepared to see. Looking with devout tenderness into her face, the dark glory of her eyes made him tremble. She addressed him. Her voice faltered at the beginning, but rolled on liquidly and smoothly anon.

"Thou art a Christian knight."

She stopped, then went on.

"Thou hast honor and truth. Nor are these qualities all thou possessest to commend thee to the heart of a lady."

Mornay began to doubt if this were the Madonna.

"Thou hast a form and a soul to excite the deepest sentiment in woman."

She averted her eyes, and a beautiful blush tinted the lily on her cheeks.

"In thy country, brave Frank, it may be shame for dame or damsel to make the confession I am now making. Love of thee has brought me hither!"

"Who art thou, lady?" asked the knight, who had arisen at the sound of her voice, and now stood before her in an attitude of respectful attention.

"If I answer, 'One that loves thee,' is not that enough?" she replied, gently.

"This is our first meeting, lady," said Mornay. "You can have no personal knowledge of those qualities which you are pleased to attribute to me."

"Knight of the Red Cross, look at me attentively. Observe these poor features closely."

"Nay, lady, I recall nothing familiar in your face; but your voice hath a chord in it that touches me," responded Mornay, intensely mystified.

"Thou hast heard it before, and looked also into these eyes. Mine ears have heard thee utter those noble sentiments that so well become thee, and which have made me thy slave, and induced me to risk life and honor to offer thee liberty. Christian knight, I will renounce my religion; my kindred; my station; my country, and fly with thee to Spain, or any other land thou wilt! See! I have the King's signet-ring, which will carry me like a potent talisman from the Alhambra. Two mighty steeds are waiting us on the

bank of the winding Darro! In the King's stables there are none equal to them in speed. If all Granada pursued, we yet could escape. Sir Raoul Mornay, wilt thou come?"

"Sweet and gentle lady," replied Mornay, in a mournful voice. "I may not stir from this prison through guile, or by giving or suffering to remain on your mind a false and deceitful impression. I discover in your speech, and now somewhat in your countenance, that you are the youth, Zegrin, or rather the one that personated him. This being the case, you must be aware, by the sentiments you have heard me express, that hypocrisy is a sin I would not be guilty of. Lady, your beauty might turn a pilgrim back from the sepulchre of the Nazarene, and make him forget both his vows and his religion; and I know not how far I might prove recreant to my faith at your bidding, were not my thoughts already placed on a maiden whose lovelessness is only equaled by your own."

The Knight of the Red Cross spoke in a subdued tone and earnest.

"I expected to hear this confession. It wounds me, but does not affect my purpose. I offer you love and liberty the same. I make the great sacrifice the same!"

Her tones were sweeter, her manner more bewitchingly persuasive than before.

"Thou art charming!" exclaimed Raoul. "It is hard for the heart of mortal man to withstand your enchanting allurements. Ask me to go as the slave of your beauty, without putting trammels on my heart, or making it false to another, and I will go, and be led by your white hand by a silver chain."

He bowed his head and stood submissively before her.

Her cheeks grew hot and red, as if lightning were flowing in them instead of blood.

"Thine answer is given!" she cried, passionately. "It is enough! Thou hast rejected one who never before sued to man; one who has thousands of slaves, but not one master. Thou hast chosen! Thou hast accepted Death, cold and dreadful, for Love, warm and rapturous. Be it so! Perish, hard and unfeeling Christian! As for me, I shall have peace no more."

"A thousand, thousand pardons!" exclaimed Mornay, throwing himself upon his knees. "I implore you to pity the pain of my position. I tell you I will be your slave!"

"I want no slave!" retorted the lady, with flaming scorn, and shrinking from his touch. "Thou hast chosen. Farewell!"

She turned away with the grace of an insulted Sultana, and the door was shut in his face, and he was left in darkness, with innumerable distracting thoughts for companions.

CHAPTER XIV.

AHAB VISITS HIS MASTER IN PRISON.

Instead of being carried to the torture-chamber on the following day, as he expected, he received no visits except from his jailer; and, in short, a month passed away without any change in his condition, or any further intimation of the fate in store for him. His food was of the coarsest and most unpalatable description, barely sufficient to keep off the pains of hunger.

This kind of existence grew irksome beyond degree. He was anxious to know what was passing in the world from which he was excluded. The Christian and the Infidel were doubtless in arms, and the Crescent and the Cross meeting in the shock of battle. He was harassed with continual uncertainty, and haunted by the wildest conjectures respecting Boabdil and Leoline.

He was brooding over these subjects one night, when his prison-door (as had happened on two occasions since his incarceration) was opened by other than his keeper. The movements of the visitor were silent and stealthy, as if a greater measure of secrecy was required than ordinary. It was Ahab the Witty who came in this cautious manner. Never was servant and friend more unexpected or more welcome. Entering, he locked himself in with his master. The youth was much changed in his outward seeming. Raoul now beheld him in the gay dress of a page, which transformed him so entirely, that had it not been for his calm, phlegmatic face, he would not have recognized him.

"Is it you, Ahab?" exclaimed the knight, joyfully. "Surely, I must be dreaming!"

"It is all the same! Dreams, my master, are as good as realities, any day. Yet this is no nightmare; your devoted Ahab stands in your presence, with his wit and his legs as much as ever at your service. I am not a fair-weather servant only, but one that will stick to you through the ugliest storms that human fortune is liable to."

The Moorish youth fingered the young shoots of what was to be a beard, and manifested the sang froid that distinguished him from all others.

"I am right glad to see you, Ahab. The old King has used me roughly, as you see. How did you gain access to me?"

"It is simple enough to a person of my wit. The mother of Boabdil dwells in this tower, and it was by getting information to her through one of her maidens, that I finally accomplished my purpose. I am now in the service of her rival Sultana, Zoroya, and a likelier page you cannot find in Granada. This piece of business done, a ring procured from her, by the greatest art and ingenuity, enabled me to dispatch the most essential part of my errand to the Alhambra, which was to obtain an interview with you."

"Thanks, faithful boy! If I but escape from this difficulty, no other page will I have but Ahab the Witty."

"Your goldship is very likely to escape, but with this one drawback and disadvantage; that you will get away without your head; and I should be loth to serve a master without a head. But we ought not to trouble ourselves about these matters. As I have often told you, no accidents ever happen. If it be written that your head be cut off, you are better without a head than with; and ought to be the last person to find fault, either before or after the event."

Ahab adjusted his dagger in his belt, and tucked up his cimeter with praiseworthy unconcern.

"I have many questions to ask. Speak to me of Boabdil and his sister."

"Which shall I come at first?"

"The lady," replied Sir Raoul, smiling.

"The last I heard of the lady, she was as lively as a cricket," quoth Ahab.

"Thou art a most unromantic knave!" said Raoul.

"Boabdil I saw not many days ago, and he sent by me this message: Tell my friend, and brother, Sir Raoul Mornay, that I absolve him from every obligation to keep faith with me, and that I will hold myself in readiness to be delivered to the King, my father, at such time and place as he shall appoint, on condition that he obtain liberty through this means. In short, my master, the magnificent Moor will change places with you; which, considering the extreme ticklishness of the whole business, is an excellent offer."

"Generous Boabdil!" exclaimed Mornay. "Go back, good Ahab, and tell him to look well to his own safety, and take no thought of me. The offer is noble, but no torture in prospective can tempt me to accept it."

"Torture in prospective," rejoined Ahab, "the way I look at it, is a very different thing from torture in reality. I can bear torture in prospective as well as another; but bring me the real thing, and I shall bellow like a bull, and wish the whole posse of them at the devil. My master, take the advice of a fool, and let this unlucky Prince step into your shoes as soon as he can get to them. After that, you can put that iron pot on your head, with the bail under your chin, and go about lancing folks to your heart's content. When you have done enough of this to make yourself feared, envied, and hated by everybody, you can wed the Princess and live happy all the days of your life."

"The Prince," added Raoul, without heeding the remarks of Ahab, "if he observe not the strictest prudence, will fall into the hands of his ruthless father."

"He has fallen into something worse than the hands of his father," observed Ahab. "He has fallen in love!"

"In love!" repeated Mornay.

"The same," said Ahab. "And a person had better fall into the sea, or into the fire. A wet person may be dried, and one that is burned may be healed; but whoever heard of any one's recovering from love?"

"Who is the favored lady?" asked Raoul, quickly.

"The daughter of Sadoc. The poor Prince does nothing but wander up and down the vestibule of the stone palace, muttering to himself, and seeing nothing, though it be two

inches from his nose. And listen, my master, I have great doubt of the good faith of the Jew, who has an unquiet eye, a grasping hand, and a money-loving soul. For gold, I think, no one would be safe with him, save that star of maidens, Salome. But, what is the odds? It is all the same!"

"Now, faithful Ahab, you truly alarm me!" said Mornay, with emphasis. "At this moment I feel most acutely the loss of liberty. Should Boabdil and his sister be betrayed to the King of Granada, I should never sleep soundly again. Not even the blast of the trumpet that should summon me to the field where spurs are won and lances broken, would have any music in my ears. Oh, Ahab, what would I not give for freedom!"

"In my view, you are thinking more of the sister than the brother; for I cannot think so badly of your taste as that you would go mad for an unlucky Moor, not of your religion. But that is not the matter. You want your liberty. The quicker you obtain it, and the farther you go from Granada, the safer you'll be."

"True in substance, but difficult of solution," said Sir Raoul, thoughtfully. "You inform me that you are in the service of Zoroya, favorite Sultana of the King. Now, the situation must have been of no easy attainment. I am astonished at your success, for the influence of Boabdil's mother, who is little better than a prisoner in the same tower, must necessarily be inconsiderable. There is some secret at the bottom of this. Describe the person of this idolized wife, who wields such power over Aben Hassan; for I shrewdly suspect that the Prince owes more of his misfortunes to her jealousy than to the predictions of the astrologers."

"My mistress is whiter than a white dove, lovelier than the dawn, and floats about the gardens of the Alhambra like a houri from Paradise. She can speak sweetly and fairly, and her anger is fatal to those that offend her. She has as much authority in the palace as the King himself, and you may see any day his signet-ring on her snowy finger."

The Knight of the Red Cross arose and walked his prison, visibly agitated. He thought of the midnight-visit of that mysterious lady, who, with the smile of a seraph and witchery of a siren, had offered him love and life and liberty! Was this the beloved and influential Sultana? Was this the woman who had power to shape the destinies of thrones? He dared not immediately receive the astounding conviction. His mind suggested query after query. Did the Sultana speak like a woman who barter all for one mad passion, or did she but try him with words of guile? He was disposed to accept the first, and more complimentary to human nature, view of her conduct.

"Ahab," he said, abruptly, "show me the ring that enabled you to pass the guards, and procure the key from the jailer?"

Ahab held up his hand.

"It is the same," cried Mornay.

"What is the same, my master?"

"I am in doubt whether to trust you with a secret of so much importance," answered Mornay.

"You will save me the trouble of finding it out myself, if you take me into your confidence. But it is all the same."

Fully persuaded that he could rely upon the fidelity of Ahab, the knight briefly informed him of the nocturnal visit of the lady and her object, describing as well as he could her figure, features, voice, and manner.

"I know so little of fine ladies," observed Ahab, "that I am not certain whether, when they say Yes, they mean No, or whether, when they say No, they mean Yes. Their tempers change so suddenly, that you seldom know what to expect from them. Usually their anger is short and their love long. Stay a woman's anger for a day, and ten to one if it ever kindles again. To scorn the love of an ordinary damsel, is bad enough; but to reject that of a Sultana, is a thousand-fold worse. My master, it don't appear to my poor wit that you will ever regain your freedom. The proud Sultana would not care to have the tale of her proffered and rejected love made a jest of by the knights of Spain."

"Ahab, your sense excels your wit."

"Hush!" whispered the youth, making a warning gesture, and approaching the door on his toes. He returned to Mornay in a moment. "I heard some one breathing outside," he added, softly. "I am very acute of hearing. No cat has more vigilant ears."

"What is to be done?" asked Mornay, startled at this discovery. "I would not involve you in my fate."

"I never was at a loss in my life. I know that what is to be will be; and it is all the same!"

The Moorish lad's wonderful coldness appeared in no manner disturbed. He drew out his dagger and examined it, then pushed it slowly into its sheath, and unlocking the door without noise, opened it suddenly. A swarthy slave stood unmasked and confused before them.

Ahab sprang on him, and struck him in the breast with his dagger.

The unfortunate wretch sank to the earth with a hollow moan, and after a few convulsive movements, ceased to breathe.

"He will never tell what he has heard," said Ahab, wiping his weapon, and returning it to his belt.

"Thou art a bold, quick lad, and I freely own that I have underrated both thy wit and thy courage."

"It is all the same," answered Ahab, stoically.

"What will you do with that lump of earth?" asked Mornay.

"No more than I have already done. I will not soil my hands with it. Let it remain for others to bury. It is of no importance whatever. Slaves perish in the Alhambra daily, without exciting inquiry. Burden not your mind with the circumstance, for it troubles no one in the tower. The carrion will be taken away; some one will jestingly ask how it happened, and that will be the end. Satisfy your conscience with the fact that he was in the secret service of the Sultana, Zoroya. Our conversation would have been repeated, and I should have been flung from the battlements of the tower, had not my dagger stopped his tongue. It was thus written. I must leave you, my master."

"If you distrust Sadoc, the Jew, find some way to put the Prince on his guard," said Mornay.

"If the Israelite comes to Granada, I shall be likely to discover him. If my suspicions of him are well founded, my mistress will know of any compact or agreement which may be made for the betrayal of Boabdil, and if her woman's tongue don't let out the secret, it will be miraculous. For your sake I will watch everything that occurs at the palace, and communicate the same to you. I must not tarry longer. May the Prophet bring you speedy comfort and relief!"

With this friendly benediction, Ahab turned the key upon Sir Raoul and departed.

CHAPTER XV.

TORTURE-CHAMBER.

A few days after Ahab's visit, Sir Raoul Mornay was taken from his dungeon, and conducted to a large square apartment not far from it. The nature and uses of this place were at once apparent. Implements that he had never before seen, machines that he had never heard of, and horrible engines without names, met his gaze on every side. He regarded all these appalling appointments with a firm countenance.

The Moorish chief, El Zagal, stood, like a dusky statue, against a column; while four lusty slaves, with bodies bared to the waist, waited, with a sort of ferocious sullenness, the orders of their superiors. Mornay remembered that he was an English knight, and prepared himself to endure with fortitude the sufferings which he could not avert, and the penalties which he did not merit.

"Wilt thou confess?" demanded El Zagal.

"What shall I confess?" asked Sir Raoul.

"Nay, if thou standest on terms, I will put the question in different form. Wilt thou cease to conceal?"

"The interrogatory is most vague."

El Zagal, who was looking at Mornay when he pronounced these words, saw him start and become suddenly pale. Abaddon and Zegrin had entered together. The coming of those singular persons had a powerful effect on Sir Raoul's mind. He bowed slightly to the magician, and turned his regards upon that mysterious youth, Zegrin. Notwithstanding the latter's face and hands were stained with the juices of plants, the features were unmistakably like those of the lady who had come to him in his prison. Let what

would come of it, he resolved not to betray her secret, but to treat her precisely the same as if she were simply Zegrin, the assistant and accomplice of Abaddon. The demeanor of the disgusted lady confirmed him in his determination; for she noticed him no more than on former occasions. Her eyes were downcast, her manner self-occupied and modest.

"You have come," said Mornay, calmly, addressing the magician, "to witness the truth of your predictions. I know not what strength God may give me; but I shall endeavor to bear my sufferings with the fortitude and resignation of a Christian knight and an innocent man. When your own hour of pain comes, may it find your conscience as clear as mine."

He looked at El Zagal, and added

"Let your sullen hounds begin!"

"I am here, not so much to test the truth of my art, as to see how one so vainglorious when in the full enjoyment of the healthful functions of life, will bear the agonies which he affected to despise," answered Abaddon, his cold eyes glittering.

"If this be your only purpose, you are welcome. May you be less satisfied than when the matchlock failed to fulfill your treachery. Were I King of Granada, you and your swindling brethren should dangle from the Alhambra's highest walls!"

"Worthy Abaddon," interrupted El Zagal, "be ready to take down, in characters, this Christian's confession. Slaves, lay hold of him, and let us try his nerves with a sinew-testing machine."

Mornay invoked all the saints, commended his soul to God, and submitted unresistingly to the tormentors. In a few moments, his manly form was stretched upon the rack, and the slaves stood waiting at the levers.

"Your name is Sir Raoul Mornay?" said El Zagal.

The knight replied in the affirmative.

"Sage Abaddon, write his name at the top of your page. His confession will follow."

"El Zagal," said Mornay, "I have heard of you as a brave and hardy soldier; and, as a soldier, I ask you once more what is required of me?"

The swarthy chief appeared moved by this appeal.

"To answer like a soldier," he replied.

"We wish simply to extort from you such information as may lead to the arrest of Mahomet Abdallah, also called Boabdil. This is the main part of the inquiry, and its truthful exposition will assure your liberty; while obstinacy will as surely result in your destruction. Shall I proceed or stay my hand?"

"Do as your master bids you. My honor seals my lips."

Zegrin had imperceptibly neared the machine; and with the coiled lamp in his hand, the two red jets darting upward, like the angry tongue of the reptile it represented, contrived to attract the attention of the principal agent in operating the engine. Mornay could not tell whether he addressed any words to the slave; but he did see a threatening glitter in his eyes that awed the trembling vassal.

El Zagal lifted his hand, the great rollers moved, the pulleys creaked, and Mornay felt a tension on his limbs. El Zagal bent over him to adjust some of the mechanism. As he did so, he whispered:

"Groan, Sir Raoul!"

This command was so extraordinary that Mornay knew not what to make of it.

The levers continued to work in the hands of the operators. The creaking and complaining of the engine went on; but it appeared to Mornay that the strain upon his limbs did not proportionately increase. A significant glance from El Zagal awakened a suspicion in his mind. Casting his eyes furtively toward Abaddon, he saw his brow knotted into a scowl of hate and triumph. The suspicion grew stronger.

"Groan!" repeated El Zagal, again bending over him.

Impelled by this advice, and his own convictions, the knight drew his face into an expression of pain, and began to emit low moans.

"Thy boasted manhood melts already," said the magician, whose blue eyes were now inflamed with some overmastering emotion.

Sir Raoul made no rejoinder.

"Methinks you use him but gently, El Zagal," added Abaddon.

"Nearly the whole force of the machine is being exerted upon him. It is not the wish of my royal master that I should tear him limb from limb, but to employ sufficient strength to test his endurance and extort his secret," answered El Zagal.

"I have no secret," said Mornay, "that I will confess, though you try me with your most diabolical instruments. Do not spare me. English flesh and blood are not so poorly attempered as to yield to the common methods of torture."

The rigors of the rack were enough to produce much suffering; but the additional efforts of the operators increased them in degree so trifling, that he could not but believe there was collusion between them and El Zagal. How this could be he knew not, though the fact grew momentarily more evident to his perceptions. Perhaps, he reasoned, he owed this favor to Zegrin, whose heart had relented at the last moment. But there stood the youth, calm and dreamy, with very little apparent realization of what was transpiring.

"I am ready to write," said Abaddon, looking meaningly at El Zagal.

"Will you reveal the hiding-place of Boabdil?" asked the latter, sternly, turning his regards upon Sir Raoul.

"By the help of God, I will not!"

"Wrench him again!" cried the magician, no longer attempting to disguise his malignity. "Dislocate his joints! crack his sinews! lacerate his muscles!"

The levers worked, the wheels revolved; but, from some unaccountable cause, the pain of the ordeal was not augmented.

"Speak! speak!" vociferated Abaddon, foaming at the mouth.

Mornay closed his eyes, and moaned languidly.

"Reveal! reveal! Where is the accursed son? Where is the traitor Prince? Where is the woe and downfall of Granada?"

"Great master," interposed Zegrin, "this Christian will mistake your zeal for the King for personal enmity. Your sublime art inculcates the loftiest forbearance and an unruffled temper."

"Most true," answered Abaddon. "I did forget myself in my boundless love for my sovereign master."

"The knight is about to swoon," said El Zagal. "We can, with safety, carry this rigor no farther. Slaves, give back!"

"He shall not escape thus!" muttered Abaddon. "Unloose him! Bring forth the brazier of coals! We will even try the plates of hot iron. His feet are of different material from what I imagine if this chafing-dish do not toast them." He had lost his momentary self-possession, and relapsed into his former fury.

One of the half-naked attendants went to procure the last-mentioned contrivance, which sat in a forge at the extremity of the apartment.

There was a slight change in the face of Zegrin.

El Zagal stood uneasily on one foot, then on the other.

A shivering sensation crept over the knight as the glowing brazier appeared. Here was a punishment there was no means of evading. Fire, applied to the naked flesh, would burn, in defiance of all the Zegrims and El Zagals in the world.

But who was this hoary-headed magician who had so much to do in the household of the King? Was he one of those astrologers who often worm their way into palaces, and, by their wits and tricks, get possession of the secrets and confidences of sovereigns? This view of the matter did not entirely satisfy Mornay, who noted with unfeigned surprise the power which he wielded over the mighty chief El Zagal.

The English knight was now seized and bound into an iron chair. Zegrin looked on unmoved, while the Chief displayed less alacrity than before. Sir Raoul's feet were bared, and the hissing vessel was being placed beneath them, when a page rushed breathlessly into the chamber of torture, exclaiming: "There is one arrived at the palace who desires instantly to see the King! His business admits of no delay. This news concerns Boabdil."

El Zagal pushed the brazier aside with his foot while Abaddon was listening to the page.

"Pronounce not that hateful word! Call him traitor!" cried Abaddon. "Who is this fellow who is in such hot haste for an audience with the King? Gave he no name?"

"He said: Inform the King of Granada that Sadoc the Jew stands without desiring audience, having most important communications to make, whereby that apostate and traitor, Mohamet Abdallah, otherwise Boabdil, may be delivered into his hand," answered the page.

"The King," said Abaddon, "is in his secret chamber, examining a horoscope that I have recently cast concerning the fate of his kingdom and the time of his son's death. Come with me, Sir Page, and you shall deliver your singular message to him in person. El Zagal," he turned to the war-worn veteran, "suspend these proceedings till you learn how this information affects the mind of the King."

Mornay was greatly disturbed by what he heard. The name of Sadoc the Jew gave him far more uneasiness than the rack. The captivity of the Israelites was well understood by him. For gold now in the coffers of Aben Hassan, he would betray the fugitives, who had trusted life and honor in his keeping. The warning of Ahab was instantly remembered. Boabdil slain, and the Princess Leoline incarcerated in the tomb, his love and his hopes would alike be vain.

While these reflections agitated him, Abaddon departed. Zegrin tarried. El Zagal, having ordered the slaves to unbind him, turned his back on him for a moment, and the knight determined to speak to the youth, whatever might come of it. Stooping toward that anomalous person, he said:

"Feared you not I would betray you, lady?"

"I feared nothing. What had I to fear, stout-hearted Sir Raoul?" The factitious Zegrin looked at him innocently.

"From me, lady, you had little indeed to apprehend; but there are those who, in my place, would have done you shame in the presence of yonder warrior and that gray-headed magician. But your secret is safe."

"It seems to me, Sir Knight, that you jest too soon after the torture." She tossed her head, and her eyes glittered. "I have no secret that might not be proclaimed from the highest tower of the Alhambra."

"Lady," returned Mornay, gravely, "you cannot deceive me, though your voice be soft as silver cymbals, and your manner as demure as the saintliest saint. I speak it sorrowfully. I could not return that priceless treasure which you generously proffered, and of which I was unworthy."

"This insolence confounds me! I am amazed! Has this child's play," she pointed to the rack, "turned your head and scattered your senses! Beware how you go further with your presumption! The brazier still glows, and the slaves are within call."

Her red lips quivered slightly, her cheeks crimsoned, and her eyes rained scorn and contempt.

"Menaces from so sweet a mouth," resumed Mornay, "cannot alarm me. I am no dupe. I know you well—your name, rank, and power."

The foot of the disguised lady beat angrily upon the floor. With her mantling indignation there now mingled an emotion that was not unlike fear.

"If you know so much," she answered, with a self-control that was extraordinary, "speak out. I dare you to fulfill your boast!"

"The beauty of Zoroya, the Light of Dawn, the favorite and all-powerful Sultana of the King of Granada, is sufficient to betray her in any guise she may assume."

The knight's voice was low, almost tender. Zoroya did not speak till the lapse of some seconds. Either she was unable to enunciate, or feared her accents might betray too much agitation.

"Your audacity," she answered, anon, "runs higher than the tallest spires of the palace. Your head I should instantly order to be stricken off and cast into the Darro. Or perhaps, which is better, I should command you to be hurled from the battlements. I know not what saves you from destruction. I ask in vain what prolongs your existence."

She clenched her hands in her excitement, and revenge and love tortured her breast.

"Proud Sultana," responded Sir Raoul, mournfully, and with that touch of gentle compassion ever irresistible to the ears of

women, "I could answer thy queries, if I shrank not from wounding a nature so sensitive and imperious as thine. Beautiful lady, you were a woman before you were a queen."

He waited a little, but the Sultana was mute.

"I should well merit the death you have named, if, by word or deed of mine, I should make you feel that you have compromised your honor as a woman, or your dignity as a queen, by anything that may have passed between us. Understand, lady, the chivalry of an English knight. I worship your sex, and instead of giving cause of complaint, am ready to devote my arm, on all proper occasions, to the redressing of woman's wrongs."

"Speak no more! My mind is not yet decided. Your fate is in my hands. That you will never leave the Alhambra, is certain. I profess to understand nothing that you have uttered. I say not what is true or what is false. My anger is not a thing that burns out in a day; it is wont to consume all that oppose it."

These words were pronounced hurriedly, for El Zagal was approaching. Striking his hands thrice together, the guard appeared, and Sir Raoul was reconducted to his prison.

CHAPTER XVI.

SADOC AT THE ALHAMBRA.

Ahab, the Witty, was walking one day in the famous Court of Lions, when he saw an old man sitting beneath a fig-tree. Ahab was dressed in that gay attire which has before been noticed, and, perchance, in compliance with the foppery and effeminacy of that period among the class to which he now ostensibly belonged, or, possibly, from some other motive, his face was materially changed by paints and pigments, which not only gave him a more youthful look, but quite transformed his plain features. With his plumed cap placed jauntily on his head, his dagger in his brodered belt, his cimeter by his side, he rambled daintily toward the man under the fig-tree, in whose sharp nose, avaricious mouth, cunning eyes, and prominent chin he recognized Sadoc, the Jew.

Ahab was secretly filled with exultation at this discovery, and took a turn around one of the fountains before he felt himself sufficiently phlegmatic to address him. To make a faithful statement, the quaint lad had for some time been on the watch for the appearance of the Israelite, having received, from time to time, information from Nicolette that led him to expect such an event. Casting his eyes into the marble basin, and seeing his entire figure reflected there, he had no misgivings respecting the entire completeness of his disguise. He drew near to Sadoc, made as if he would pass him, turned, stopped, and, playing with the hilt of his dagger, said, carelessly:

"A fine day, old man. May the Prophet be praised!"

"It is a fine day, gay youth, and may the God of Israel be praised!"

"With all my heart," replied Ahab. "You seem a stranger in the Alhambra?"

"I am; for it hath been long since I was here. I am a sojourner and wayfarer, with my staff in my hand," said Sadoc, in a humble tone.

"Can I do you any service, venerable stranger?" inquired Ahab, patronizingly.

"Thou seemest in authority here. I doubt not thy ability to speed me on my errand. Possibly thou art of the King's household?"

The crafty eyes of the Israelite were fixed on Ahab, who did not forget that he was dealing with one not wanting in subtlety.

"I perceive that age hath not dimmed your sight nor enfeebled your judgment. I am, as you suspect, in the household of the King. I am not, as you may possibly imagine, a prince, but a page in the service of the most ravishing sultana in the world; and if you know aught of the management of this kingdom, you are aware that she is the real sovereign, and by her witcheries winds the King round her finger like a ringlet of her own magnificent hair. If you wish favor at court, you have come to the right person."

Ahab folded his arms, threw his head back, strutted a little, at the same time endeavoring to look as modest as a girl.

"May He who appeared unto Moses at Mount Siani reward you for your fair speech! But, as I told you, I am a stranger within these gates, and it behooveth me to

exercise much care, lest I be taken in my own simplicity. I am desirous to stand in the presence of the King of Granada, having somewhat to communicate unto him which may be of importance to the State."

"I am glad," responded Ahab, in a most friendly manner, "that you have confided this matter to me. What is your religion, old man?"

"I am an Israelite, in whom there is no guile," responded Sadoc; "I belong to a people who have little rest, and, like those of old, wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, and hide themselves in caves and clefts of the rocks."

"Your religion will not commend you to the King; but my good offices shall make the way clear. You shall remain here to-night, and, perhaps, a day or two, or until such time as I can say a word privately to the Sultana, my mistress, who can do more for you than any at court."

"Nay, young Sir, my business is urgent, and of a nature to be pleasing in the sight of the King."

The old man spoke with earnestness.

"If that be the case," returned Ahab, "we must devise some other plan. Perhaps, if you could hint to me the character of your business, I might, in time, hint the same to my mistress, so that it would not be long in getting to the ears of the King."

"Are kings, then, so difficult of access?" asked Sadoc, anxiously.

"There is nothing more difficult, respected Sir, than to get at a King. I have known persons to pass three years in the Tower of Comares without once seeing him."

Ahab was probably thinking of the many prisoners confined in the Tower.

"God of my fathers!" sighed Sadoc, "kings are but men; and though they may fence themselves about with forms and ceremonies, pomps and vanities, they are subject to the same ills, the same sicknesses, the same accidents, and the same death."

"True as the Koran!" exclaimed Ahab.

"What is thy faith?" asked the Jew.

"That which is most convenient. I am a Christian among Christians; a Jew among Jews; a Mohammedan among Mohammedans. I am young, but I find this wisest and best. Where I cannot be of two religions at the same time, I am nothing. When questioned, I answer that I have not wit enough to decide on matters of such vast consequence, but leave them to those who have more wisdom than I."

"Verily, young page, thou art discreet; and I do not mind telling thee that my errand concerns one for whose head there is set a great price. Did Muley Aben Hassan mistrust on what errand I come, he would hasten from his palace to meet me and do me honor."

"If this be the case," said Ahab, thoughtfully, "I know of but one thing that could interest him so much; and that concerns a certain apostle and traitor, who is hidden in the mountains and cannot be found."

Sadoc looked grave; then, rising from beneath the fig-tree, and taking the youth by the arm, said:

"Thou art no fool, young Sir. If thou dost not rise to distinction, it will be because thy merits are overlooked. Thou hast hit the nail on the head. The character of my communications you have shrewdly solved. But, mind you, I say naught of a certainty. I do not affirm that I know definitely the abiding-place—or, more fittingly, the hiding-place—of this Moorish fugitive, or this Prince; yet I could give a very useful judgment, and, peradventure, by my counsel and advice, guide the great King of Granada to the accomplishment of his desires."

The old man's eyes twinkled cunningly.

"Venerable Israelite, the Prophet himself hath inspired you! Had you come from the Seventh Heaven you could not be a more welcome visitor to the King's palace. You will receive riches and honors. You will return to your home and kindred laden with gold. I pray you, in your prosperity, which may be surely counted on, that you have me in some remembrance."

"You truly believe that my errand will have good speed?"

Sadoc's small eyes expressed the avariciousness of his soul.

"Such good speed, son of Abraham, that I should like to give you a thousand pistoles for half the venture. I know the munificence of Hassan. He may receive you gruffly at

first; but when you leave the Alhambra, finally, you will go forth in raiment of brocade, seated on an Arabian horse, with a slave behind you leading another Arabian horse loaded with gifts. Sage Israelite, I have fifteen hundred doblars; accept them, and give me your secret."

Ahab clapped his hands on his pockets and beneath his silken doublet; questionless, he was searching for the doblars. It was now that the Jew's visage really began to express the feelings of his heart; and not only his face, but his whole person, his very fingers quivering with expectation. Ahab had skillfully touched the overmastering passion of his being. The eccentric youth inwardly exulted to see the overstrained chords respond.

"I came not to bargain with you, sharp youth, but with the King, your master. I drive not trades with children; but I have traded, ere now, with kings, when extravagances or reverses have pressed them to the wall. I am not a hard man, yet I hold it no sin to take advantage of the hour and the circumstance."

Ahab, who was never long in forming conclusions, had already made up his mind what to do. One of the King's pages at that moment issued from the Garden of Lindaraxa, and was crossing the Court of Lions. Ahab hailed him.

"This worthy Hebrew," quoth he, "would see the King. His errand concerns the fugitive Prince."

"What is he called?" asked the page, regarding him superciliously.

"Names are of no account," answered the Jew, warily.

"Then," replied the page, "your errand is of no account, and you may take it yourself."

"God forbid that I should be ashamed of my name!" returned the Jew, seeing the error he had committed. "Inform the King of Granada that Sadoc the Jew stands without, desiring an audience, having most important communications to make, whereby that apostate and traitor, Mahomet Abdallah, otherwise Boabdil, may be delivered into his hands."

The page stared at the old man a brief space, and then ran away, with a speed more complimentary to his heels than his dignity.

"Your business," said Ahab, still preserving his friendly demeanor, "is as good as done. That is the most tonguey fellow in the palace. What his memory cannot furnish, imagination will supply, so that you need be under no concern about your matter getting an airing with the King."

"You told me a short time ago that it was the most trying of all undertakings to get speech with a sovereign," remarked the Jew, sagaciously.

Ahab winked about a dozen winks, and extricated himself with masterly skill.

"That vexatious delay happens when there are no pages to speak a good word for the stranger, and when his business tallies neither with the avarice nor the malice of the monarch."

At the expiration of half an hour (which interval was passed by Ahab and the Jew in amiable conversation), the page returned, quite breathless, and bade Sadoc follow him. He left Ahab without a word of parting civility, and hurried on his treacherous mission. The Moorish youth unsheathed first his dagger and then his cimeter, replacing both carefully.

"An Arabian horse, a slave, and another Arabian horse! I think I see that slave and those horses! But all will be as it is written, and as it was destined to be a million years ago. Some will die and some will not; some will be kings and some subjects; some will betray and some will be betrayed. But it is all the same!"

Ahab surveyed his reflected image once more in the water, and walked placidly from the Court of Lions.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOORISH PRINCE SURRENDERS TO SALOME.

Boabdil, after the departure of Sir Raoul for the Alhambra, passed several days in tranquil meditation and friendly discourse with his sister. The relief of feeling safe was inexpressibly grateful; and his gratitude not only extended to the Jew but to his daughter. Day after day, the Prince and Leoline wandered, arm in arm, and explored

together the mysteries of the stone chambers. Occasionally, Salome joined them in their walks—her graceful and modest demeanor and charming conversation adding not a little to the enjoyment of the fugitives. The fair-haired and melancholy Boabdil grew hourly more interested in the Jewess. He sighed often, and fixed his eyes upon the ground, which symptoms were by the ancients interpreted as signs of love.

Leoline noticed his abstraction, and rallied him upon his taciturnity; but neither jest nor advice were sufficient to restore him to his former self. He had few opportunities of being alone with Salome. Sadoc was ever present; he followed them like a pale shadow, till the Prince grew annoyed with his intrusions.

On a few occasions, he had opportunity to address her; the first and second he neglected, the third he improved. They were in what was termed the Chamber of Fountains, listening to the plash and murmur of falling waters. Sadoc was in his stables, and Leoline was taking a siesta in the crimson chamber. The heart of the Moorish Prince could not withstand the divine eyes of Salome. He who was born to wield a sceptre trembled like a boy in the presence of beauty.

"I have lost a throne!" said Boabdil, pensively.

"You are not the first that has suffered a similar misfortune," answered Salome.

"I have lost more than a throne," added Boabdil, his gentle and mournful eyes directed to the ceiling.

Conscious embarrassment distressed the Jewess. She had never heard the words of flattery, yet her instincts warned her what to expect. A woman often apprehends what she has never learned by experience. A scarlet dye suffused her cheeks. She would have arisen had not Boabdil detained her.

"Remain with me a moment, fascinating maiden! Hear a confession which will neither disgrace me nor shame thee."

"I entreat of you to be silent," said Salome, imploringly.

"That may not be. I would not again lose an opportunity which may never occur again. The stranger, the fugitive, the debtor to your hospitality, here presumes to avow his love for you—a love which he firmly believes true and eternal!"

The Prince paused, and ineffable earnestness and tenderness shot from his dreamy eyes.

"You know not what you do! You know not what you say!" answered Salome, much moved. "We differ in outward circumstances; we belong to two races of men; our educations and habits are dissimilar. You are a Moslem; I am an Israelitish maiden. The abyss between us is impassable!"

Salome's agitation encouraged Boabdil.

"Say not impassable! Who should raise objections if we do not? Each must be unhappy or miserable for himself. If you and I, glorious Salome! unite in sweet and eternal companionship, who has a right to complain?"

His expressive eyes drew her like magnets. She thrilled beneath a power she had never before experienced. Pain and pleasure were strangely commingled in her virgin bosom.

"My father! my father!" she exclaimed, as if fearful of her own resolution.

"Thy father, divine Salome! is enfeebled by age, and embittered by persecution. Think for thyself, beloved! Let not another steal from thee the sacred prerogative of choice."

The accents of the Prince were tender beyond description. His whole soul glowed with the fervor of passion.

"My father, O stranger, was my earliest monitor and friend. He taught my infantile tongue to speak and my feeble feet to walk. What do I not owe him? He wishes not another to live in my thoughts. He looks with jealousy upon thee. He hates thy religion; he distrusts thy purpose. Of late, he is not himself. Although his wealth exceeds the desires of a prince, his love of gold is unsatisfied."

Salome, for the first time since they had met, looked earnestly into his eyes. There was something she wished him to comprehend, which she had not strength to utter.

"Salome," sighed Boabdil, "thy truth, thy unsullied innocence, thy immaculate honesty, subduces me more and more. Without thee I should, indeed, be miserable!"

Boabdil covered his face with his hands.

"Who art thou?" asked Salome, solemnly. "Lady!" answered the son of a king, melted to a woman's tenderness, "thy voice compels me to truth. I am Boabdil, son of Muley Aben Hassan, King of Granada, and heir to his magnificent throne. But were I to choose between the throne and thee, the throne would never be mine."

Boabdil sank on his knees, and caught the white hand of Salome, who, overcome by a new and delicious emotion, had not the strength to repel him.

At that inopportune moment, Sadoc, like a wrinkled phantom, appeared in the Chamber of Fountains. Salome, with a sob and a sigh, closed her eyes and swooned. The cries of Sadoc brought Leoline to the spot, whose wisely-directed efforts presently restored the beautiful Jewess to consciousness. With a woman's tact and a sister's friendship, she sent the Jew on a dozen useless errands, to spare the excuses of her brother, and the blushes of Salome.

"Trust not too much to my father," she whispered, with painful reluctance. "Tell him not your secret. Confide only—only in me."

These few words gave the Prince unalloyed pleasure. The first step toward success was taken—there was a secret and a trust between them.

"It was the chilliness of the fountains," said Leoline, chafing Salome's hands.

"It never affected her before," said Sadoc.

"So much the better," said Leoline. "I wonder that she has never been ill with it."

"I observed," returned Sadoc, dryly, "that the fountains affected your brother also. He was on his knees when I surprised them."

"How devoted of him! She would undoubtedly have fallen, had he not interposed," replied Leoline, with exquisite address.

"God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!" exclaimed Sadoc, lifting his hands, voice, and brows simultaneously. "One is to see without believing!"

Leoline and the maid Nicolette spirited away Salome to the crimson chamber, leaving the Hebrew pale with surprise and ill-concealed anger.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SADOC AND SALOME.

After the foregoing scene, Salome's dread of her father grew stronger and more palpable to those who observed her closely. She never met him without anxious and questioning looks. He began to avoid being alone with her, and was often remarked in a musing, abstracted attitude, as if engaged in some obtuse and difficult calculation.

Salome liked not these omens, and availed herself of the first opportunity to attempt to fathom his thoughts. The old man would have walked away hurriedly, but she detained him.

"Fly me not, my father!" she said, with affectionate earnestness. "Thou concealest something from me!"

"Nay, daughter, thou mistakest my manner," he answered, evasively, without lifting his eyes to hers.

"My father, deceive me not!" exclaimed Salome, impressively.

"Speak not of deception; it is thou who hast deceived. It is thou who hast lent a willing ear to the tempter! It is thou who hast forgotten the God of thy fathers, and listened to the wily tongue of the infidel! Thou hast brought a reproach on the house of Israel! Oh that I had turned this artful stranger from my gates, even with blows and revilings!"

Sadoc spoke with vehemence and bitterness.

"Thou charest upon me too much," said Salome, with calmness. "I have had no stolen meetings with the stranger who is with us. What passed between us in the Chamber of Fountains thou knowest."

"Thou hast poured poison into my veins, and given me to drink of the bitter waters. Accursed be the day when he crossed our threshold and broke bread with us!" answered Sadoc, wringing his hands and beating his breast.

"Hear me with reason, my father. The Moor, Abdallah, hath ever deported himself toward me in the most respectful fashion. Nay, often his reverence for me borders on idolatry and worship of the creature. Sometimes I have entertained great fear lest he exalt me, in his imagination, above the law-

ful object of man's adoration," said the girl, with a soft sigh.

"Soul of my father!" cried Sadoc, impatiently. "Hear the girl's simplicity! Hear her condemn that thing which she alloweth! Hear her unwittingly confess her guilt!"

"Guilt, father?"

"Ay, guilt, my daughter; for thou hast received the worship of this heathen dog without rebuke; and not only without rebuke, but with simpering complaisance and maiden blushes, which convey more comfort to the heart of man than lispings words," said the Jew, trembling from head to foot. Salome had rarely seen him so moved.

"I meant not to err, and I could but listen, being taken unexpectedly and by surprise. It were not seemly to cry out, and courtesy required that I should give respectful attention to what the courtly Moor had to offer in his own behalf."

The face of the Jewess had now lost somewhat of its serenity, and there was a deeper flush on her cheeks and brow.

"I have nursed thee, Salome, as the apple of mine eye. In thee are centred my hopes. For thee I have accumulated great riches. Thou canst command more gold and silver and precious stones than the King of Granada hath this day in his treasury. They that know me think me poor and miserable, hunted down into the dregs and very beggary of life. Child!" he stretched forth his right hand exultingly, "thou canst found a city; thou canst supply kings with treasures to carry on their wars, and yet have a sufficiency left to make thy heritage the envy of all. Yet what art thou doing? Receiving the worthless incense of a vagrant infidel! Thou, a princess in the house of David! Thou, the pride and beauty of Israel! Thou, the star of the daughters of Judah!"

As he went on, the old man gradually grew impassioned, and by the time he had finished, he stood with hands clasped before him, and his eyes, glowing like sparks of fire, turned upward. This sudden gleam of inspiration surprised even Salome, who had often seen him in moments of exaltation.

Neither were aware that they were not alone; neither suspected that one of the great columns of the vestibule concealed the Moor, Jakob, Boabdil's servant. But he was there, drinking in with avidity every word that was uttered.

"Thou meanest well, my father, and thou lovest me; and while thou livest I will not leave thee. Thou hast never before spoken to me so plainly of thy riches. I knew thou hadst abundance of silver and gold, but not that it so far exceeded the common gains of men. I fear it will be unto thee a pitfall and a snare. Let but the birds of the air get possession of thy secret, and thou wilt be hounded down and despoiled, as if thou wert but a carrion-crow! Oh, my father, put from thee this sore temptation! Cast it into the sea, or hide it in the bowels of the earth, or scatter it among the poor, or fly with it to some foreign land!"

She took his hand, but he drew it angrily away.

"What!" he sneered. "Hast thou no wisdom? Is thy mind disordered and distraught? Thou speakest like one of the foolish virgins who went forth to meet the bridegrooms without oil in their lamps, which, though a Christian metaphor, is not without aptness—the oil, no doubt, meaning the treasures of this world. Cast it into the sea? I would sooner cast myself into the sea! Into the sea? I will accumulate more. I will make thy fortune greater by thousands of ounces of precious ore. Ay, there is even now a venture in my mind that will bring me exceeding profit."

Sadoc chafed the dry palms of his hands together, smiled craftily, and forgot his enthusiasm in greedy longings.

The swarthy Jakob stood breathless behind the column, agape with wonder, and shaken with doubt and expectancy. His eager eyes were ready to start from their sockets, and every moment dragged along with the tediousness of an hour. The fear of detection made his limbs tremble beneath him, and it seemed to him that the Jew might plainly hear the unnatural thuddings of his heart.

"Father! father!" cried Salome, imploringly, "my sleep has been haunted by strange visions of thee. My feelings admonish me when you meditate wrong. Do nothing, I warn you, against the peace of Abdallah.

Do it not for his sister's sake, for thine, and mine. The curse of God follows treachery. If thou knowest any secret connected with this courteous Moor, keep it to thyself."

"Who talks of secrets?" he answered, sharply. "Why do you take me thus to task? Am I not capable of conducting my own affairs? Has not this trembling hand signed contracts with kings and potentates? Have I not driven bargains with the great ones of the earth? Have not my treasures given new life to the flagging energies of war, decided battles, and changed the fate of states and kingdoms? Ha, ha! Ha, ha! Go to any of the courts of the sovereigns and whisper the name of Sadoc, the Jew, in their ears, and see if they do not start!"

"I doubt it not. I know thou art great in thy power over money. Be therefore content with thy enormous hoards. Close thy transactions in Granada; gather up thy riches, and let us depart." Her pleadings were eloquent as an angel's.

"That could be done, daughter. The stone chamber you wot of contains not a seventh part of my wealth, but the remainder is bestowed where I can, without much trouble, lay hands on it. In the casket which was thy blessed mother's thou wilt find, in case of my sudden decease, an inventory of all I possess, and where each particular item, property, and valuable is to be found. And now, Salome, sweet image of my sainted Rebekah, hearken unto my voice. Pluck this infidel, with a strong hand, from thy heart. If thou lovest him, crush and crucify that love. Thou art a princess, and this thing is not to be. My white lamb cannot herd with the dark wolf of Islam!"

"Father, dear father," sighed Salome, "he may be converted to the true faith. I may be the humble instrument of enlightening his mind and convicting his understanding."

"The leopard cannot change his spots!" retorted Sadoc, grimly.

Salome remembered the Sleeping Leopard on Boabdil's shield, and had read the device beneath: "Do not wake me."

"Thou turnest pale," added Sadoc. "The figure goeth home to thy consciousness. He is indeed a leopard, but he shall not rend my kid! He is a Philistine and a heathen. If he suddenly cometh to naught, let it not grieve thee."

"If evil come upon him through thy means, directly or indirectly, by word, by deed, by artful insinuation or implication, I swear to thee, by the God of Israel, that I will esteem him a thousand times more highly for that evil."

"Then may the curses—"

"Curse not, my father, curse not! Curses are sent back by the Divine Being to torment those who have the impiety to utter them. They are a dreadful, dreadful brood, those curses returned by the avenging Deity!"

Salome stood erect and inspired before her father. In the mellow light of the stone chamber her face was seraphic, and her divine person worthy of adoration.

"Leave me, leave me!" muttered Sadoc, afraid longer to trust himself.

"One word more, my father. Remember, in all thou doest, that sweet maiden, his sister. Never was earthly dust more perfectly molded, or a human spirit more divinely tempered. Thy paternal eyes have thought me fair, but her beauty exceedeth mine as the moon exceeds the stars. Notwithstanding our different faith, she hath yearned herself into my heart, and we have sworn by the God of Solomon (an oath which her conscience alloweth), that our two souls are to be as one, and that we will never, of our own free will, separate from each other. Through me she will be imperceptibly led to reject the Prophet and worship the God of Israel. Look, my father! She comes this way. Sawest thou ever such grace of motion, such modesty of look and gracious dignity?"

Sadoc ground his teeth in rage, and turning his back on Salome, strode away, full of disappointment and bitterness.

CHAPTER XIX.

JAKOB'S SECRET.

Those who noticed Jakob, observed that a change had suddenly come over him. He no longer talked cheerfully with Ali and Asaph, but moved about with moody brow and unquiet eye. Ali the Grumbler tried to bring him out of his taciturnity, but without much success.

"This is a poor service," said the sullen

Jakob, one day, when Ali had been rallying him on the strangeness of his conduct.

"And why a poor service?" asked Ali.

"First, because we serve for nothing; second, because the service is dangerous; these are two very good reasons."

Jakob looked at his fellow-servant to see if there were any signs of discontent on his countenance.

"I grumble," answered Ali, "because grumbling is my business; and I have grumbled so many years that I should be loth to leave it off. But I never grumbled because I was ill-fed, or ill-clad, and my master was in adversity. The poorer he is, the more closely I will stick to his service."

"If that is your way, I can tell you," replied Jakob, "that it's not mine."

"Well, go on, and show me what you are coming at. For the life of me, I cannot yet get an inkling of your real meaning. Speak plain, Jakob, when plainness is required; for my wit is slow and I come not easily by ideas."

"I intend," answered Jakob, studiously avoiding the gaze of Ali, "to seek new service, and find a master who will give me more money and less danger."

"Knave!" exclaimed Ali. "I am tempted to break every bone in your body! Would you desert the most indulgent of masters in the hour of trouble? Would you fly, like a miserable coward, and leave him with none but Asaph and I to draw a dagger for him, to saddle horse or hold stirrup, or to follow him in his sudden flights. Go too for an idle vagabond!"

"Had you given me good words and a friendly ear, I would have put you in a way to make your fortune; but now may the devil take me if I mention it!"

Jakob looked at Ali askance, to see what effect this would have.

"I am at a loss to know what kind of a way that would be you would put me into so easily, unless you designed me to join the banditti that infest the mountains. Perhaps you meditate the betrayal of your master, the Prince; and if such be your purpose, you had better go and throw yourself from yonder crag."

Ali's eyes began to glitter, and he fingered the handle of his dagger.

"Thou art a fool," muttered Jakob, angrily. "I will talk with thee no more, and my secret I will reserve for myself."

This conversation took place in the stables, and made a marked impression on the mind of the sagacious Ali, who was well aware that the desertion of one of his fellow-servants might bring the greatest danger upon Boabdil. Had he been sure of the fellow's sincerity, he would have laid him dead on the spot; but thinking his avowal might arise from momentary discontent and ill-temper, he allowed the matter to pass. From that hour the grumbling but faithful Ali watched, with fox-like cunning, the incoming and outgoing of Jakob. Yet there were seasons when his duty rendered it impossible for him to keep him under observation, and which Jakob shrewdly improved for the advancement of his own dark purposes; a purpose which had its birth behind the column, when Sadoc avowed the possession of great wealth. The Jew, from that time, became the special object of his vigilance. He could not move without being secretly dogged, or watched from behind a fountain, pillar, or statue. He lurked in niches; he hid himself in angles; he lay in wait in all places, and finally, to his infinite satisfaction, discovered something that had always perplexed him—the chamber where the Israelite slept, when, after every other eye was closed in slumber, he stole like a thief to his own hard couch.

Ali and his fellow-servants sometimes slept in the stables with the Jew's grooms, and sometimes in a small chamber leading from the main hall; and it was not unfrequently the case that one or more of them slept in the hall itself. This state of things gave Jakob excellent opportunities of forwarding his design. The daytime, he soon perceived, was not the season to commit the robbery he contemplated; for the old man, like a faithful sentinel, never went far from his treasures.

One night, Boabdil sought his couch earlier than usual, and was soon in a deep slumber. Sadoc, having satisfied himself of this fact, lighted a lamp, drew a rusty sabre from beneath the cushion on which he had been sitting, and looking cautiously in every

direction, glided away toward his treasure-chamber like a spectral shadow.

The lamps were still burning in the long passages. Jakob followed his victim, observing due care to keep at a prudent distance. The old man's suspicions, sharpened by years of dealing with mankind, were the most dangerous enemies he had to encounter. The Israelite had educated himself to be shy. He had schooled himself to distrust everybody. He paused every few yards, held up his light, shaded his eyes, and, with the sabre tucked under his arm, peered this way and that, as if he partly anticipated that robbers would rise from the stone floor to throttle him. Leaving the hall, he passed through some smaller apartments that were not lighted, and presently, opening an iron door, entered the place where his heart was.

Jakob was not far behind, but too distant to easily reach him before he passed in. The guilty Moor stood hesitating what to do, fearing that Sadoc would lock the door; but was agreeably disappointed, when, instead of hearing the bolt slide, he saw the iron barrier left ajar. This, although unknown to Jakob, was according to the habit of the Jew, who invariably drew his couch near the door, so that no one could enter without disturbing him, and that every noise in the chambers might reach his ears.

The old man soon made his simple preparations for repose. He invoked the God of Israel, and placing his lamp on the floor, stretched himself on his bed with his sabre beside him. Refreshing sleep had long been a stranger to his eyes; constant apprehension of peril from within and without had destroyed that nice susceptibility to rest that renders slumber the sweetest gift of Deity. Even after his lids began to grow heavy, his eyes would wander dotingly toward his coffers. Money-bags, precious stones, bonds, deeds, and securities, floated wearily through his worn and over-taxed brain.

It seemed to the crouching Jakob, that Sadoc never would sleep. He waited near the door till his heavy respiration should tell him the hour had come; but when that wish had been nearly realized, the Israelite would start up and mutter about his daughter and the Moorish Prince. He heard the unhappy man communing with himself after such returns from the brink of slumber. He cried out more than once:—"Talk not to me. I will not do it! It will bring gold! It will save my child! They concealed it from me. Ha! ha! My wit was too keen for them. A Prince—a son of a King—the heir of a throne—and, above all, a fugitive that will bring his weight in gold!"

Jakob imagined that he heard a sound much like the light step of a woman, and barely had time to secrete himself, when Salome advanced slowly through the long range of apartments and stood at her father's door. She was enveloped in a white night-robe, her naked feet thrust into small slippers, and her dark hair floating over her snowy shoulders. Even to the sullen Jakob she looked like an angel. She listened a long time to her father's uneasy breathing; and when he at length became more quiet, she invoked a blessing on him, and stole softly away.

Jakob crept from his lurking-place, and, assured that the old man slept, drew his dagger, and began gently to push his body through the aperture without alarming him, resolved to dispatch him the moment he was within reach of his arm. The door grated on its hinges. Sadoc moaned and tossed his arms. The assassin remained motionless till his respiration again became natural. Jakob pushed with his elbows, and hands, and feet, but with a wariness that was painful. He held his breath, and though murder was in his soul, shivered at the wickedness of the deed. Now the door swung softly, but his heart beat more loudly. He sank upon his knees, groping along the floor with his left hand, and holding the dagger in his right. He could see the old man. His sabre lay beside him, disturbed somewhat by his turnings, but still within his reach. The bronze lamp, companion of so many wretched nights, burned where he had placed it.

Jakob could now see quite distinctly. Sadoc's bleached head and withered cheeks lay slumbrously beneath him. He took in the whole man at a glance; he calculated rapidly, and knew the exact point where his heart was beating. And looking across that

heart, he beheld the coffers which it loved. He grasped more tightly his weapon; he bent over Sadoc and his right arm went up.

"Slave! wretch!" thundered a voice more startling to Jakob than the tramp of the last judgment. He gasped, glanced over his shoulder in ghastly terror. Then there was a quick motion, a glitter of steel, the flash of a cimeter; Jakob's head fell on Sadoc's breast! Two jets of blood spurted nearly to the ceiling.

The old man awoke, and taking in a part of the picture—a quivering, bleeding trunk, a dis severed head on his chest, and Boabdil standing with a dripping cimeter—began to shrink in the most frightful manner.

"God of my fathers! Moses and the prophets! I am slain I am foully murdered! O my daughter! my daughter! Salome! Salome!"

The stone chambers reverberated with his cries. It was in vain that Boabdil tried to pacify him. His fears had reached a point beyond the control of any one but Salome, and she came running to the spot in indescribable alarm, followed by Leoline, Nicolette, and Ali. She paused in amazement at the scene which presented itself. There was her father ghastly with horror; there was the stiffening trunk of Jakob; there was Boabdil leaning on his stained cimeter. She knew not what to think. Sadoc, seeing her, sprang up and threw himself into her arms.

"O Salome, sweet Salome, save me from this man of blood! Thee only I love. For thee have I wrought in the heat of the day. For thee have I guarded these treasures!"

His voice failed him, and he sobbed on her shoulder. Age and terror had sadly weakened him.

"What means this?" asked Salome, with marvelous calmness, casting her eyes on Boabdil.

"It means, beloved lady, that I have saved your father from assassination! Had not the Prophet inspired me to watch the steps of that traitor," he pointed to the body of Jakob with his cimeter, "your father would have been now even as he."

"God of Israel, I thank thee!" murmured Salome. Then to Sadoc, "Father, fear not! Behold thy savior. Look at Abdallah!"

The old man, feeling the encircling arms of Salome, and that his person was sacred within them, raised his head and glanced at the Prince. His fears allayed, his emotions tranquilized, his naturally acute understanding took in the generalities of the scene. The reaction from terror to serenity was as sudden and remarkable as the transition from sleep to horror. He was the cool, calculating Jew again.

CHAPTER XX

NICOLETTE'S WARNING.

"This," said Ali, musingly, "is the secret which Jakob was to reserve for his own benefit. Little gain has it brought him! He had better have kept honestly at service than coveted another's riches. Noble master, how knew you of his design?"

"In passing my couch he dropped his dagger. The sound awakened me. Impressed by the stealthiness of his manner, I thought it prudent to watch him. In following him, I soon perceived that he was dogging the footsteps of our entertainer. This was enough to excite the worst of suspicions. I kept him in view till he reached the door of this chamber." At this point Salome blushed. She was conscious that he must have witnessed her nocturnal visit to her father.

The Prince, noticing her embarrassment, passed over that circumstance.

"I waited," he continued, "until the knave entered cautiously our friend's apartment with drawn dagger. His fate is known to you."

"It was well merited," said Ali.

"The avaricious wretch!" murmured Leoline.

"Accept, brave Sir," said Leoline, "the gratitude of my father and myself."

"Yes, accept our thanks," quavered Sadoc, looking fearfully at Ali. "But let every one go away. No good can come of staying here. There is nothing here that anybody wants. Good Abdallah, let thy fellow take away this mortality. It is most unseemly. See! here is blood on my doublet—a doublet that cost a deal of money when it was new."

"I will not touch the villain!" protested Ali, with a strong expression of disgust. "Send for your grooms, old man. I'll not defile myself with such dirt!"

No persuasion could induce Sadoc to leave the spot. He remained there, walking to and fro like an unquiet spirit, until the body of Jakob was removed. When the grooms came to take it away, he stood tremblingly between it and his coffers, and was relieved beyond measure when they had disappeared with it. He then locked the iron door, and would not permit Salome out of his sight till morning.

The following day he was very busy in that quarter of his habitation where this had happened, and Boabdil suspected that he was removing his treasures to another place of concealment. This event had a perceptible influence on his conduct for a few days, and then it was forgotten or artfully concealed. Having arranged everything apparently to suit him, he ordered a horse to be saddled, and saying that he had business at a Moorish fortress not far off, rode away.

This movement was evidently unexpected by Salome, who manifested much surprise when informed of it by Nicolette. What her reflections were, no one knew; but both Leoline and her brother remarked that she was greatly troubled. The former, by numerous gentle arts, endeavored to extort from her the secret of her anxiety.

"Alas!" answered the fair Jewess, "my affliction is of that kind which cannot hope for alleviation in the sympathy of friends."

"The most distressing grief," replied Leoline. "If your distress in any manner concerns the fugitives whom you have generously sheltered, unbosom yourself to us; and, if necessary to your peace, we will go hence, and trespass on your hospitality no more."

"To part with you," said Salome, tenderly, "will be the greatest of misfortunes."

"Beautiful Salome," said Boabdil, "when I am king of Granada, I will remember those who gave me a hiding-place when my life was sorely beset."

"The God of Israel grant that you may be restored to your own, and that your heart may be turned to the true faith!" exclaimed the Jewess.

"Since I have seen thee, sweet maiden, I have had the first doubts of my religion and the Prophet," said Boabdil, in a troubled tone.

"Brother," said Leoline, "we should not forget Sir Raoul Mornay, that worthy Christian knight, to whom we are so much indebted. It is now a month since he set out for Granada. Some evil has befallen him, or he would have returned ere this."

"Sister," replied Boabdil, "thou art right; and if he return not in a day or two, I will disguise myself, and seek him at every risk. To find him, I will penetrate the Alhambra itself, assured that he would do as much for me were I in like peril."

Leoline's face instantly flushed. Her glowing cheeks bespoke her interest in the Christian knight.

Nicolette, who had listened with interest to this conversation, presently found an opportunity of speaking with Boabdil privately.

"Great ladies," she began, "have a vast deal of sense, and they are very gentle and bewitching withal; but you never can get a plain truth from them. I don't say this out of malice, because I love my mistress. I know what makes her unhappy, which is more than you know, though a prince of the blood. I believe it takes a common person to speak common sense."

The pretty Nicolette paused, and put one arm akimbo very piquantly, probably to give her noble auditor a chance to ask what she meant—a lure which he, like others of his sex, very quickly accepted.

"I always knew, my girl, that you were very sensible. Do you mind making me your confidant, Nicolette?"

The Prince smiled kindly.

"Fair Sir, you always know how to say the right thing at the right time. Should you ever be king of Granada, I trust that you will not forget the youth Ahab. But to come to the matter. My mistress—may the God of Israel keep her!—has a father. Fathers and their daughters are not always alike. That father is cursed with the curse of avarice. That is not her sin. He has gathered together riches enough to turn the head of a king. He loves Salome—he loves gold. Water

must run down hill—a miser must run after gold. His soul cannot rest. Whenever there is an opportunity to add to his fortune, he has not the strength to resist. Who knows this better than my mistress? Gentle Sir, I fear you are no longer safe in the stone palace of Sadoc. From my soul I compassionate your misfortunes; for your dejected looks, your frequent sighs, your soft and pensive eyes tell me that you suffer. Hear the counsel of a poor girl. Take your sister and fly. Seek safety in some other retreat that creeping, miserable Avarice has never entered. Providence will, no doubt, direct you."

"My good girl," answered Boabdil, presently, "your kindness affects me. I will consider what you have said. The heir of a throne has nothing with which to reward your friendship but his good will."

"I want no more! I want no more!" cried Nicolette, kissing his hand. "Remember the youth Ahab."

With these words, she glided away swiftly, leaving Boabdil to meditate on what he had heard.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE POISONED DAGGER.

Sadoc followed the page, with visions of gold teeming in his imagination. Some doubt of the honorableness of his errand obtruded upon his mind; but he stifled such thoughts as speedily as possible. In passing into the palace, he turned his eyes neither to the right nor left to notice those objects of curiosity which usually attract the notice of strangers.

The King received him in a private chamber. Sadoc saluted him after the manner of the country, and assumed a humble attitude.

"Thou art Sadoc, the Jew?" said the King, after eyeing him leisurely.

"I am so called," replied the Israelite, submissively.

"Thou hast dealt somewhat largely in money's, Sadoc?"

"Not of late years, your Majesty. Formerly, I dealt somewhat; but heavy losses compelled me to seek a humbler occupation."

Sadoc sighed. Aben Hassan covertly smiled.

"Thou art reputed rich. Truly, I am sorry for thy misfortunes; but if thou learnest by them not to lay up thy treasures on earth, thou wilt in the end be the gainer."

"Thou speakest like a rabbi," said Sadoc, somewhat dryly. "Riches are oftentimes a snare, and yet, Sire, they are better than poverty. It is not easy for the old to become inured to the privations that the young only can endure."

The Israelite's countenance became very grave.

"Where dwellest thou, Jew?"

Muley Aben Hassan yawned and looked unconsciously at Sadoc.

"I have no abiding-place. I flee from city to city, the avenger of blood behind me. The rulers and potentates of the land show no compassion for such as I. When I had gold, I was somewhat thought of. Now, alas! I am but Sadoc, the accursed Jew."

"It is marvelous that one so sharp should become so poor. What brings thee to me?"

"Now," thought the Jew, "we are coming to the point."

"Being, as I have told thee, a sojourner and a wayfarer, it becomes me to take advantage of every circumstance to better my condition. Sire, I have a secret to sell."

"Thou comest to a poor market. I would rather sell than buy. Yet the page mentioned something of thy business to me, and I am disposed to entertain thy proposals. Thou wouldst make a bargain with me for the delivery into my hands of Boabdil, called the Unlucky?"

The old King smiled grimly.

"I like thy plainness. There is no virtue like straightforwardness in matters of business." The Israelite seemed revived by the prospect of driving a bargain. He stroked his beard and rubbed his hands, as he was wont when looking prospectively at bags of gold and silver.

"Do you propose to bring this apostate bound to Granada?" said the wily King.

"God forbid!" cried Sadoc. "I am not a man of battle. I would no more lay hands on him than I would touch the fiery dragon of the bottomless pit!"

"A bird in the hand, worthy Sadoc, is worth two in the bush. If thou wouldst drive a bargain, bring me the bird," said the King, calmly contemplating the bowed figure of the Jew.

"Thou mistakest me, noble master," protested Sadoc. "It was not in my presumption that I could bind the young lion and deliver him into thine hand; but I thought, peradventure, he might be taken by guile—ontangled, as it were, in a fisher's net; lured into an ambuscade, and seized upon by some of thy young men."

"Venerable Israelite, solve me this question: Knowest thou the hiding-place of the apostate Boabdil, who claims to be the lawful heir to my throne, and who has, in his pride and falsehood, it is rumored, made treasonable proposals to Ferdinand of Spain?"

The hawk-like orbs of the gray-bearded Hassan penetrated Sadoc like steel arrows. The old man's habitual cunning did not forsake him, but fear was fast undermining it. This, of all queries, he least cared to answer directly; for he knew somewhat of the temper of kings.

"Great Hassan," he said, with much appearance of deference, "I only affirm that I may give such hints as may speedily lead to his capture. I would not exalt my knowledge too much." While the Israelite was thus qualifying his knowledge, El Zagal and Zegrin entered the apartment of private audience.

"Thou art welcome, El Zagal. And thou, Zegrin, stand behind our chair," said Hassan. "We have here," he continued, "the exemplary Israelite, Sadoc, who comes to sell us our son Boabdil, the pretender to our throne. Speak, El Zagal. How many ounces of gold shall I give for the traitor?"

"Not an ounce!" answered the unbending Moslem, bluntly.

"A hundred ounces!" muttered Zegrin.

The King having mused a moment, once more addressed the Jew.

"Israelite, I ask you again if you know the abiding-place of this untutored son?"

"Powerful monarch," answered the crafty Jew, "if I find him out, I will receive no reward."

Aben Hassan clapped his hand thrice, and instantly the black slaves came in, and prostrated themselves till their sooty foreheads touched the floor. One carried a stout stick, with a cord attached to it; another an instrument called the bastinado.

The King slightly nodded his head, and the Jew was laid sprawling on his face before he was aware of the danger that threatened him. One of the blacks seated himself on his shoulders, the stick and cord were adjusted in a twinkling, and his feet bared.

"God of Abraham!" cried Sadoc. "What evil is this that has befallen me?"

"Lay on!" said Hassan. One of the slaves began to apply the bastinado to Sadoc's feet. The old man howled with pain, and dug his nails into his palms.

"Hast found thy tongue, lying dog?" asked the King, after this cruel punishment had continued long enough for the black to lay on a dozen or twenty blows.

"Mighty sovereign," whined Sadoc, "the hearts of all men are in the hands of the king. Permit me to arise and stand before thee, as is seemly, and I will answer thee without evasion."

"Thou art well enough as thou art. Learn from this not to tamper with the temper of kings. Knowest thou the secret haunt of Boabdil?"

"Pussant Hassan, I may safely affirm that I can lead thy young men to him," answered Sadoc, still adhering to his non-committal policy.

"Give him another taste of the cudgel!" commanded the King, with a careless wave of the hand; and while the bastinado was flying, and the old man shrieking, turned and conversed complacently with Zegrin.

El Zagal stood shrugging his shoulders.

"Father Abraham, thou hast given me over to the tormenters! I am afflicted even unto death! I suffer greatly in my flesh, and my strength faileth me. He that is wise will not put his trust in princes. I crave your mercy, O Aben Hassan!"

"Slave, rest your arms. We will see if this Jew will need to reason. Knowest thou or knowest thou not, that which I asked thee of? Yea or nay, and that quickly!"

"As my soul liveth, yea!" groaned the Hebrew.

"Hast thou sheltered and secreted him? Pause not to frame thy speech, for truth needs no delay, and from willing lips flows naturally."

The old man was now in a dangerous dilemma. He thought of his treasure and his daughter. He felt that Heaven was rewarding him for his treachery and grasping avarice. If he answered in the affirmative, he might lose his head the moment his services were no longer required; while, if he replied in the negative, the bastinado would again torture his burning feet.

"I conducted him to a cave on the side of a mountain, where he yet abides; and where I have from time to time supplied him with food, according to his needs," he answered, with a semblance of candor that deceived the King.

"Was there with him a maiden?"

Hassan averted his eyes, and spoke in a milder tone.

"Verily, a damsel of exceeding beauty," said Sadoc.

"Sawest thou ever an English knight in his company?"

"I have, my Lord. He is hight Sir Raoul Mornay, and professed to be in the service of Spain."

"Thou canst go directly to this cave?"

"My memory," stammered Sadoc, "is not what it was a dozen years ago, and my eyes are wondrous dim; yet—"

"Slave!" interrupted Hassan, "cure that dimness and quicken his feeble memory."

"Nay," screamed Sadoc, at the first blow; "I succumb! I can go direct as an arrow to that cave whereof I have told you."

"That is to the purpose. Fellows, let him up," said Hassan, with a significant nod at El Zagal.

"Verily, my feet are broken in pieces, even as the tables of stone were broken by Moses!" muttered Sadoc, trying to stand. "My reward, great sovereign? Might I presume to speak of my reward?" he added, with abject humility.

"My Treasurer," answered Hassan, gravely, "shall count thee out ten pistoles." The Hebrew groaned aloud. His consternation paralyzed his tongue.

Hassan clapped his hands again. A warrior, booted and spurred, with cimeter girt to his thigh, entered the royal presence. His countenance was peculiarly dark and morose. He fixed his eyes on the King, and looked at no other till he had spoken.

"Hamet, thou art faithful?" said the King.

"Unto death!" answered Hamet, with profound reverence.

"I believe thee! Are thy men ready?"

"They stand each with a hand on the pommel of a saddle."

"It is as it should be. Advance, Hamet. Take this dagger; the point is poisoned; its merest prick will produce death."

Sadoc stood gaping with wonder.

"Thou seest that old man?" resumed the King. "Thou wilt mount him on his horse, rivet a chain to his wrist, and fasten it to thy saddle-bow. Let him not from thy sight day nor night till he lead thee to a certain cave, wherein our traitor-son, Boabdil, lies concealed. If he deceive thee, and thou take not Boabdil, strike him with this poisoned dagger—no matter how lightly, he will die miserably."

"Sovereign Lord, thou art to me as the Prophet himself! Thy words are like the verses of the Koran. All thou hast commanded shall be performed as faithfully as if thou wert the All-seeing Eye!"

Hamet took the dagger, kissed the hilt, and thrust it beneath his girdle.

Sadoc hobbled forward and fell on his knees.

"Mighty King, have mercy on an old man and a sinner!"

He smote on his breast, and bowed his gray head.

"My beloved Hamet, take this Hebrew and set him astride his beast in the manner I have ordered, and let not the grass on the vega grow the sixteenth part of a hair's breadth before thou art outside the gates of the Alhambra."

"God is just!" groaned Sadoc, and fell senseless at the feet of the King.

The grim Hamet bent over the miserable Israelite, raised him from the floor as if he had been a sack of down, tucked him under his right arm, and stalked from the royal presence with his countenance as unmoved as a shield of brass.

CHAPTER XXII.

EL ZAGAL.

Ahab, as soon as he had left the Court of Lions, hurried to the Tower of Comares as fast as he could. Threading his way down to the dungeons, showing Zoroya's ring to the various guards on duty, he arrived at the prison of Sir Raoul, who had but a few moments before returned from the torture-chamber. Ahab, struck by his paleness, inquired the cause of it.

"I have," said Mornay, "been to the apartment where they keep the playthings of kings and tyrants."

"I know what these are," said Ahab. "The rack, thumb-screws, pressure with weights, the suspending of poor devils by one hand or one finger, the hot braziers, and various other cursed contrivances. I hope your worship has come well out of it?"

"In the most incredible fashion! The wheels and pulleys revolved, the horrible engine created, and I suffered no great strain."

"That was out of the common course. Who was present?"

The Magician, Zegrin, and El Zagal."

"My wit cannot help you much in the solution of this mystery; but if the lad Zegrin had not something to do with it, I know nothing of the matter. Who do you think has arrived at the palace?"

"Inform me, worthy Ahab."

"Sadoc, the Jew, is now having audience with the King. I met him in the Court of Lions. This visit concerns the Prince. I offered to buy his secret, but he would not sell it, thinking to drive a better bargain with Muley Aben Hassan. But it is all the same; I have not a pistole! If he gets gold from the King, never again give me credit for wit. My master, he has come to betray your friend, Boabdil."

Mornay heard this announcement with profound sorrow. He walked his prison in the greatest perturbation. The danger that threatened Boabdil affected him more than his own misfortune.

"He must be warned of his peril!" he exclaimed. "Learn, if you can, the result of the old man's interview, and communicate the same to me as speedily as possible."

"Certainly, your worship; it shall be as you say. I am your servant. I go here and I go there, and it is all the same."

Ahab coolly left Sir Raoul, and was gone an hour, when he came back with all the particulars of Sadoc's bargaining. He waited to be questioned before opening his budget. Mornay finally drew out the whole truth.

"Yes," said Ahab, after once repeating the story, "he got the bastinado, instead of money-bags. The slave laid it on lustily, and El Zagal says that he roared like a hoarse old lion. He has got to ride, too, with that raven, Hamet, with a poisoned dagger at his breast and a chain riveted to his wrist, so that he cannot get away without taking Hamet, horse and all. It is the curse of Allah for his treachery. The father and daughter are as much alike as a hyena and a dove. Her heart would break if she knew his villainy; but whether it would break or no, it is all one!"

Mornay walked his cell a few moments, then, fixing his eyes on the Moorish youth, asked:

"My faithful friend, is there not some way of escape?"

"As there are but a very few things utterly impossible," responded Ahab, "escape may be practicable, though not easy. There are several armed men to pass, at different points, whose vigilance cannot be lightly disarmed; and, perchance, the dagger may have to be used."

"But bring me a dagger, and, if need be, I can use it as well as another. Time presses. Hamet and his men, according to your information, are already on the way, attended by the wretched Sadoc. If nothing can be done for my liberation by our united wits, you must mount the swiftest steed that can be procured, nor drink water nor draw bridle-rein till you reach the stone castle of the Jew."

"We will wait till night, which is near at hand. Meantime I will procure the dress of a Santon, with such weapons as I can conceal about me. You shall take, also, this ring, which may serve you, perchance, when nothing else will."

"Your plan," replied Sir Raoul, "has some show of success in it, and I am willing to hazard anything upon it. Depart at once, and make all needful preparation."

"There's nothing like trying," quoth Ahab. "Wit first and heels afterward! If I were in your place I should not so much as lift my little finger one way or the other. You see, my master, that it is just here; if it is recorded in the book that you are to rot here, nothing in Granada will prevent you from rotting. If it is scratched down in the same book, whether in coarse hand or fine, that your joints are to be dragged asunder by one of those cursed machines, you'll be so dragged, if the devil stood at the door. But, on the contrary, if it be written in that volume that you will cut your way out of this tower and escape, not all the armies of the King can keep you here. But that which is decreed will happen; and whether it be one or the other, it is all the same!"

"'Tis a most solacing doctrine, sage youth. But it is doubtless written that I should make some effort for my liberty, and that you should assist me; therefore, speed on your errand," answered Sir Raoul.

"One thing, my master, is good as another; but since you exercise the right of choice, it is mine to obey. I turn the key on you and I go. If the Prophet, or the God of the Christians, or the three Deities of the Jew—that same Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—aid me, as some of them ought to, it makes no difference which, I will most assuredly return to you with the things I have mentioned; for Crescent and Cross and unleavened bread are all one to me. If I do but eat and drink and sleep and wear clothes, it is enough."

The Knight smiled, and waved him away with his hand.

"Then there is one thing more, your godship. If that magnificent Sultana, that enamored she, that black-eyed houri from the third heaven, should chance to drop down upon you, swear that you love her better than your daily bread. Tell her that her eyes glitter like two new daggers. That her breath is sweeter than a collection of roses. That her nose is more comely than the Virgin Mary's. That her mouth is more ravishing than a honeycomb, and that her voice is more melodious than the wind! If she asks you to fly with her, fall on your knees and vow there is nothing that you half as much desire. Do this or not; it will be all the same!"

Ahab the Witty locked the door on Sir Raoul with imperturbable serenity, and went his way.

Mornay's confinement was never before so irksome. The betrayal of Boabdil would affect him in a most tender point. What would happen to Leoline after that catastrophe? Imprisonment, perhaps death. Most distressing was the possibility that he might never again behold her. In such an event, he believed he should be deprived of the better part of his life. Again, while he was mewed up in the tower, gallant deeds of arms were unquestionably being daily performed by the knights of Spain. He was chagrined that he could not share in those achievements and win a name that should be dear to his mistress.

To his infinite astonishment, while these vexatious reflections were whirling through his brain, the swarthy chief, El Zagal, presented himself.

A haughty smile curled his lip.

"Christian," he said, disdainfully, "thou camest off miraculously well from the torture! Thou art indeed a favored mortal. Let thy prudence equal thy obstinacy. The softest hand may crush a mailed warrior. Conceal from the astrologer and from the King the singular immunity that has been granted thee this day. It is something that hath seldom before happened. Thy secrecy will be thy safety."

"Brave El Zagal, I will not fain to misunderstand you. I am indebted to some one, whom I will not assume to say; but to that person I would convey my most respectful acknowledgments. I kiss reverently the hand that stayed my torture, and held back pain. It must have been a most potent hand, and I were not a chivalrous and courteous knight not to confess it and return suitable thanks."

Thy speech, proud unbeliever, cannot give offence to any; and I pray the Prophet to deliver thee from thy bondage," answered El Zagal, in a friendly tone.

"You are generous, gallant Moor. Let me inform you that I have heard of your feats of arms. There is not a name more renowned than yours among the Moslem hosts. The

cavaliers of Spain often mention your exploits with admiration."

The famed Moorish leader smiled grimly. The pride of the warrior gleamed over his sallow visage.

"By Allah! I would like to break a lance and cross swords with thee. Though thou art not of my faith and country, thou hast the spirit and gentle courtesy of a worthy and meritorious cavalier. I wonder not that thou art agreeable to the eyes of lady fair. Even a sultana may be forgiven for a truant thought! But, by the sacred Caaba, thou hast been but shabbily treated! As a bearer of dispatches from the Christian King, thy person should have been respected; and if thou escapest not, it will be no fault of mine."

"By the souls of my ancestors!" cried Mornay, "you make me think better of human nature. May the time soon come when we can meet in a fair field, in full view of the Christian and Moslem armies. To be vanquished by El Zagal would be no disgrace."

Sir Raoul Mornay extended his hand; the dusky and taciturn chief grasped it in his bronze fingers. A flash of his softer nature streamed into his face. His eyes beamed in an unwonted manner. Through his parted lips his teeth shone out like pearls.

"It is the compact of men," he said. "A sincere friend, an open enemy, and a soul above disguise. Knight of the Red Cross, El Zagal, the Chief of the Moslem armies has spoken!"

Those hardy palms of honest foemen pressed each other for a brief instant, then El Zagal bowed low, turned away, and departed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ABADDON.

This remarkable interview had a cheering effect on the depressed spirits of Sir Raoul. He was rejoiced to discover manliness and nobility of soul even among his enemies.

In due time, the phlegmatic Ahab came, bringing the garb of a santan and a dagger for his master. Having the ring so well known to the guards, they dared not dispute his passage.

Mornay put on the garments over his own, and with the dagger in his hand, the point concealed in his sleeve, submitted himself to the guidance of the youth, whose sagacity and attachment he had no reason to distrust. Ahab described to him as well as he could the passages to be traversed, the sentinels to be passed, the flights of steps to be ascended, and the conduct to be observed when outside the town. He also gave him the ring. Mornay, invoking the Divine protection, addressed himself to the perilous attempt. Ahab followed a few yards behind.

The first guard, who was stationed not far from the knight's prison, eyed him suspiciously. He had seen no santan pass that way, but the ring in a measure satisfied his misgivings, and Sir Raoul moved on. Ahab, who had gone in and come out frequently, was not questioned.

Turning a corner, he came rather abruptly upon the next sentinel, who was not so easily satisfied. He glanced at the ring, held Mornay by the sleeve, examined his features minutely, and said:

"Fellow, I have no remembrance of thy features. Besides, no santan has passed me during my watch."

Mornay spoke the Moorish language fluently, but knew little of the mummeries of the class he was personating. He answered, quietly:

"Friend, your memory is short. It is scarcely a half-hour since I gave you the blessing of the Prophet, and went on my errand, which led me by thy post."

"Now, thou art a false knave!" exclaimed the Moor, unsheathing his cimeter, and attempting to seize the knight by the throat.

"Die!" muttered Sir Raoul, and, with the swiftness of lightning, plunged the dagger into his breast. He sank to the earth, and Mornay, concealing his weapon beneath his flowing garments, hurried on. Ahab came up with him.

"There is one more," he said, "whom you have to fear; pass him, and all will be well. If you see suspicion in his eyes, strike! After this, go up the first winding steps you come to, at the top of which you will find an aged Moor, sitting in a chair, with a sabre across his knees. Place in his hands as many pis-

toles as you can spare, and say 'Shibboleth.' This is all that you need do. He will see the sparkle of your ring, nod, smile, and the thing is done. Should you meet the Magician, do unto him as you have but now done to the wretch behind us."

The knight observed these instructions, and advanced with much dubiousness upon the soldier of whom Ahab had warned him. As it chanced, he was sleepy, and in a mood not to be very particular; so, glancing at the ring, he permitted the knight to go on. Still following the directions of the youth, he ascended the winding-steps, came upon the old Moor, put five pistoles in his hand, held up the signet, pronounced the word "Shibboleth", and moved forward. He was now in a hall more frequented by those who came and went and attended upon the King. He had walked but a short distance, when, to his dismay, he beheld El Zagal pacing to and fro with slow step and thoughtful brow. At first he was disconcerted; but, seeing but one course left, went boldly forward.

The Moslem leader heard his footsteps, and, with the instincts of a warrior, laid his hand upon the handle of his cimeter; then falling back to the wall, and folding his arms upon his breast, said, with a peculiar smile:

"Pardon me, holy dervise! My mind was on the field of battle as you approached. I hope you have no reason to complain of your treatment in the tower of Comares?"

"My son," answered Mornay, "I complain of nothing. The will of Allah determines all events."

"Most true, pious santan. He predestinates who shall come and go, who shall live and who shall die, who shall love and who shall hate, and who shall languish in dungeons," returned El Zagal.

"Even so, warrior! Thou art most wise. The Prophet has unquestionably enlightened thy mind, and given thee the pearl of wisdom for the dross of ignorance. But I must not tarry. The inspiration within me calls me hence," added Mornay.

"The inspiration within you will peradventure tell you to keep to your left hand as you pass out of the tower, and to avoid the knot of men-at-arms at the right-hand exit."

El Zagal looked steadily before him. No change came over his iron visage. Mornay was too quick and apprehensive not to perceive the friendly meaning of the Moor.

"Allah has indeed instructed me," he answered, in a subdued and grateful voice. "I have learned a lesson this night that I shall not soon forget; which is that generosity is the noblest gift of heaven!"

El Zagal smiled; that smile was like light breaking upon darkness. Mornay lifted his basinet and passed on. Turning to the left, as El Zagal had hinted, he soon found himself in the Court of Lions, where he paused for Ahab, who presently appeared.

"It is all well, my master! It was written that you should escape. The will of fate must be fulfilled. But we must away. Two splendid horses, saddled and bridled, and ready to mount, await us on the green bank of the Darro. All that remains for us to do is to hasten from this accursed spot. Yet we should not complain; everything is as it should be; and it is all the same!"

"Lead the way, in God's name!" answered the knight. "Hamet is on the road, and Boabdil and his sister are in danger."

"True, your worship. We have business enough on hand. Unleavened Bread will do the mischief if we tarry by the way; although I suppose it amounts to just nothing in the end. None of these give recompense. The wisest person is he who exerts himself the least. Were all the world of my way of thinking, nothing would be done."

Hastening on, they began to descend a steep and rocky hill to the Darro. When about half way down, the knight saw a figure moving slowly toward them. The darkness prevented immediate recognition. Mornay kept his hand on his weapon. When within a few paces of the person, he beheld in him Abaddon, the Magician. Quicker than it can be related, he called to mind the arts and hypocrisies of this singular man; how he had tempted him at the Vermilion Tower; how he had attempted his life with a matchlock; how, like a stealthy leopard, he had come to him in his dungeon; and, lastly, his appearance and conduct in the torture-chamber. When he remembered these things, his indignation was great.

Seeing Ahab, the Magician stopped, and

eyeing him and the false santan keenly, asked:

"What is thy name, youth?"

"It is anything, mighty Magician, that people please to call me. You can call me Mahomet, Baal, Beelzebub, Belial, or Belphegus; and it will be all the same!"

"You had best give me a civil answer. Methinks I have seen thee about the palace," answered Abaddon, drawing still nearer to Ahab.

"Very likely!" said the latter, coolly. "I have a great deal of business with the King and the Sultana, and they would find it hard to get along without me; for I have nimble feet and nimble wit."

"I doubt thy wit, but not thy impudence. But this"—he turned to Mornay—"by his garb should be a santan?"

"The most extraordinary santan in Granada!" said Ahab. "So great is his holiness that he has wrought miracles, almost without trying. His power nearly equals your own."

"I should like to see him work a miracle or two," retorted Abaddon, bending his cold, blue eyes on Sir Raoul, who cared not to endure his scrutiny. He put out his hand to thrust him aside, when Abaddon caught him by the wrist.

"This," he cried sarcastically, "is a remarkable hand for a santan! It is not thin with fasting nor unnerved by painful ordeals. It is like the hand of a warrior."

"Stand aside! My business is urgent!" said Mornay.

"Pardon my curiosity, holy man; but I would see more fully the features of one who must be so inspired as thou undoubtedly art." The Magician spoke with that composure which usually distinguished him, but his bearing was resolute.

Sir Raoul could restrain his anger no longer. Seizing Abaddon by the shoulders, he lifted him from the ground and shook him fiercely.

"Why should I not fling thee from this battlement of stone?" he cried, springing to the edge of a jutting rock, and holding Abaddon over an abyss of some fifty feet in depth.

"May the angel of God have mercy on me!" shrieked the Magician.

"Thou mayest well ask the aid of Heaven," said Mornay, "for I have but to unclothe my fingers to drop thee to perdition in an instant!"

In his struggles, the old man's turban had fallen off, and with it a wig of white hair. Looking down upon his agitated face, the knight recognized Muley Aben Hassan, King of Granada.

"Drop him, my master, drop him!" said Ahab.

Sir Raoul was so astounded by the discovery, that he came near following the youth's advice. He snatched him hastily from the dangerous position in which he had placed him, and setting him upon his feet, for a brief space remained speechless.

"King of Granada," he said, presently, in a husky voice, "thou hast been near death this night."

Aben Hassan's white lips moved, but no sound escaped them. He raised his eyes upward, and seemed inwardly returning thanks for his escape.

"An hour ago, I was in thy power; now thou art in mine!" he continued.

"Thou art Sir Raoul Mornay!" faltered the King.

"I am that injured knight. I have escaped from your dungeons, and fate has delivered you into my hands."

"It is the will of Allah!" sighed Hassan.

"Most true, great King. All this was written," interposed Ahab.

"King of Granada," said Mornay, "we part not thus. Your life shall be sacred in my eyes; but you ascend not again the throne of Granada!"

"Proud Englishman," returned Hassan, with dignity, "remember that I am a king, and that Allah protects the persons of kings."

"If he protects thee, it is well; I will not complain." Then to Ahab: "Youth, bring yonder turban and those white locks that lie on the stones."

Ahab obeyed in silence.

"Aben Hassan, once King of Granada, be pleased to assume your disguise. You are about to take a journey in my poor company to yonder mountains, and I would not have

you recognized by those whom we may chance to meet."

"To the mountains!" exclaimed Hassan, full of consternation. "Wouldst thou put upon thee this indignity?"

"Talk not of indignities! Am I not even now reeking from thy dungeons? Are not my joints swollen and stiffened by thy tender mercies? Be thankful that I do not strike thee to the heart!"

"I acknowledge that I did thee some wrong, Sir Knight, but it was because thou wert leagued with my apostate son. Do no violence to my wishes, and I will make ample amends for what has passed. Thou shalt return to Ferdinand laden with riches and honors. Thou shalt bear letters from me to thy King, accrediting thee the bravest, the most courtly and puissant knight in his service; and that there fights not under his banners so meritorious a cavalier."

"I trust thy faith no more! Were I so infatuated as to return with thee to the Alhambra, my head, to-morrow morning, would be seen grinning from thy battlements, on the point of a lance!" replied the knight of the Red Cross, sternly.

"I swear by my religion, by Allah, and by the Prophet, that I will fulfill my promise that I here make, to the very letter and spirit of the same!" protested Hassan. "And more than this I will do," he added, sinking his voice and speaking hurriedly, "thou shalt wed the princess Leoline! I swear it!"

The blood flew like lightning to Sir Raoul's face. For a brief interval his emotions were painfully intense. The old King perceived his advantage and would have followed it up, had not Mornay waved his hand imperiously.

"Nay, nay, old man, it will not do! Thou hast broken faith with me once, and did I trust thee a second time, I should deserve to be betrayed. Take my arm and let us descend to the Darro. Fear not for thy life; I will guard it as my own. But attempt to escape, or raise thy voice, or practice any device to that end, and King, as thou art, I will sever thy head from thy body!"

"It is just!" murmured the King, and refusing the proffered arm of Sir Raoul, walked with bowed head and frequent sighs, down the hill.

Reaching the verdant bank of the river, Mornay saw two horses tied to a fig-tree, pawing the ground impatiently.

"There are the steeds I spoke of, my master," said Ahab, in a more deferential tone than he had ever used in addressing Sir Raoul.

"Ah," muttered Aben Hassan, "it is to thy treachery that I owe this!"

"Father of Boabdil, for once in your life thou hast spoken the truth. And this is not the only good turn for which thou art indebted to Ahab the Witty. I have done something for thy son and something for thy Sultana, but no more than was written. And whatever thou mayest think of it, and whatever may come of it, it is all the same!"

"Irreverent and false varlet, I may yet hang thee from the loftiest turret of the Alhambra!" retorted Hassan, with a flash of his old fierceness.

"After I am hanged," answered Ahab, "it will make no manner of difference how I died."

"Aben Hassan," said Mornay, holding the stirrup, "you will mount this horse."

"There is no choice," answered the King. "Circumstances and physical strength give thee the advantage." The old King vaulted into the saddle, and in obedience to a gesture from the knight, Ahab leaped up before him, and grasped the bridle-reins. The betrayed monarch began an angry and vehement expostulation, but Mornay checked him by a determined look.

"Search him, my master, lest it be written that I be stabbed from behind," said Ahab.

"If it be written, Ahab, according to your own showing, nothing can prevent it; nevertheless, your advice is good. Great Abaddon, I will search thee. There may be on thy person some of the mysterious implements of thine art."

"Be not too familiar with the person of a king! I will spare thee the trouble." The King drew a dagger from his bosom, and, with a haughty glance, gave it to Mornay.

"It is well," said the latter. "The first sign of treachery will be the signal of thy death. Ahab, thou art acquainted with the

country. Ride on; I will follow. Conduct us to the castle of Sadoc, the Jew."

A malignant expression passed over Aben Hassan's face; he was thinking of Hamet and the poisoned dagger.

Sir Raoul mounted, and Ahab, giving the impatient charger the rein, swept away with welcome speed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JOURNEY OF SADOE.

Mounted on his horse, and chained to Hamet, with his feet smarting from punishment, Sadoc began to think seriously of his conduct. The ten pistoles that had been paid him before starting to the mountains jingled in his pockets, and in his rage and mortification he would have gladly cast them into the Darro or flung them into Hamet's face. But this was no time for the manifestation of his feelings. It was better for his safety to dissemble; and hypocrisy came somewhat naturally to the Israelite. To lead Hamet and his followers to his stone castle, where he kept his daughters and his treasures, was a thing he did not mean to do. But he was placed in a situation so precarious, that it would require consummate art to extricate himself from the difficulty in which he had indiscreetly become involved. As he rode along across the Vega, or plain, that lay between them and the foot of the mountains, he taxed all his craft for a subterfuge by which to evade the conditions imposed. He recollected, finally, a spacious cavern inhabited by banditti, and to this cavern he resolved to lead Hamet and his ten followers. This expedient appeared a most clever one to the Jew, and his spirits immediately began to revive.

Being compelled to guide the movements of Hamet, he wisely resolved to make as long a journey of it as possible; so wound about strangely through valleys, passes, and defiles, keeping, however, every locality fixed in his memory. He tried to beguile Hamet into conversation, but that dark Moslem was not easily beguiled. He either remained entirely silent, or indicated that he heard, by a stiff movement of the head. Sadoc, as a last resort, drew a small wicker flask from his doublet, and after tasting its contents, proffered it to the glum Hamet, who shook his head and gravely declined the favor.

"Thou art most temperate, Hamet, and I commend thy prudence. Thou art young, but my old blood needs occasional warming."

"Thy blood," answered Hamet, with unchanged countenance, "but recently got a most thorough warming!"

The Israelite winced, for his feet every moment reminded him of the bastinado. Yet he did not regret this retort, for he had gained an advantage with his surly companion.

"He might have spared his cudgel and my feet," he said; "for I would have betrayed this Boabdil out of mere hatred, if there had been no money in the case. But having an eye to mine own interest, I thought it best to drive a bargain, if possible; yet the choleric monarch was shrewder than I."

"Faith! I think he was!" snarled Hamet.

"It may be so, but if he had hearkened to me to the end, he would have been greatly the gainer. The cavern I have mentioned is sometimes frequented by robbers, and there are vast treasures concealed in one or more of its secret recesses."

"What might be the number of these robbers?" inquired Hamet, beginning to be interested.

"Not less than six, not more than ten, according to the best of my knowledge," replied Sadoc, with much seeming simplicity.

Hamet rode on in silence, thinking of the concealed treasure. The Jew's chain jingled on his doublet, and the pistoles jingled in his pocket. Both reminded him of his disgrace, and both whetted his desire for vengeance.

"If the Prince," he added, "was not protected by those fellows, he could be easily taken."

"I care not," replied Hamet, gruffly, "for six or even ten such varlets. With those sturdy warriors at my back, what have I to fear? Yet," added the Moor, with characteristic distrust, "I scarcely credit thy tale."

"I ask not credence," returned the Jew, humbly, "I do but speak that you may understand the true state of the case, and practice such strategy as you may think proper for the capture of him you are in search of."

The treasure which I mentioned was foully come by, being plundered from travelers and merchants, together with five bags of gold taken from my own person, with much abuse and violence."

Hamet watched the countenance of Sadoc some time without speaking. The Jew, feigning not to see him, kept his eyes dejectedly bent on the ground.

"Thou lovest not these robbers, I should say?" said the Moor, anon.

"They are to me as swine's flesh, which is abominable! I spit upon them! May the curses of Heaven light on their heads!" The Israelite glanced slyly at the poisoned dagger which Hamet wore in his girdle.

"Swear to me," he resumed, with much earnestness, "that if you secure the unlawful gains of these despoilers, you will restore to me my own, or, at least, the fourth part of my loss."

"It is not my business to bargain with thee, as thou knowest; therefore, say no more of the matter."

Being forbidden to converse on the subject he most wished to press, the Jew rode on revolving his chances of escape in his mind, and contriving new wiles.

Having guided Hamet till long after dark, and penetrated far into the labyrinths of the mountains, a halt was ordered, Sadoc protesting all the while that he feared misleading them if they went farther. He was taken from his horse and chained, like a wild animal in a menagerie, to a small tree, near which the Moor stretched himself in his blanket, his followers doing the same thing at a little distance. This, like his other position, the Israelite could not have anticipated when he set out on his traitorous errand. With the dim sky over him, and the blurred mountain-ranges around him, with escape apparently impossible, he had ample time to reflect on his folly.

He had talked of robbers in the afternoon, the whole tale being a coinage of his own brain; but those lawless gentlemen by and by proved nearer than he had supposed. A little after midnight, Hamet and his ten men were furiously attacked. The latter, thinking discretion the better part of valor, after striking a few blows and losing some of their number, turned and fled. Not being able to secure and mount their horses, they fell into the hands of the banditti.

Hamet fought like a lion, but finally, perceiving that his friends had deserted him, and that courage could not avail against numbers, seized the Jew and hurried away with him on foot, which greatly increased his sufferings, his feet being swollen from the bastinado. He complained bitterly of his tortures, but received no sympathy from the stern Moor.

"If thy feet," quoth he, "are sore, it is thine own fault. Hadst thou told the truth, there would have been no need of a cudgel; and if thou triest to escape, that poisoned dagger is in my belt!"

In this wretched plight Sadoc was led, or rather dragged, along by Hamet, who, seeing that the undertaking had thus far failed, was strongly inclined to make an end of him at once. When the Israelite could endure this rough treatment no longer, he sank to the earth, protesting that he could go no farther. Casting his eyes about hopelessly, he desisted at a short distance, the ruins of a castle, and made a last effort to reach it. Having, with slow and painful steps, arrived at the ruins, he entreated Hamet to stop, and, sinking down like a dead man, in the first sheltered spot, slept more soundly than he had ever done in his life.

When he awoke, he saw Hamet stretched across the only way of egress, reposing like a weary warrior. It was nearly morning. A few pale stars gleamed upon the shattered turret, fallen tower, and tottering wall. A silvery moon, too, shed its mild glories upon the melancholy and deserted spot, revealing Hamet as he slumbered. The Israelite arose to a sitting posture and contemplated his unrelenting master. He had placed the poisoned dagger in his bosom; Sadoc saw the hilt protruding. His hatred and his vengeance took a tangible form. Was not the opportunity before him? Had not the God he served, delivered his enemy into his hand? He began to warm and glow with the thought. His aged limbs felt new strength, and his feet, he fancied, lost half their smart. The chain on his wrist rattled; Hamet had

gone to sleep with it in his hand, but it had just dropped from his unnerved fingers. The Jew softly drew it in, winding it about his arm. He got upon his knees, then upon his hands and knees, then crept cravily toward his terrible custodian. The Moor, stretched on his back, breathing deep and regular, was peradventure dreaming of his dark-eyed wife and tawny-cheeked babes; faithful to the King, his master—faithful to them.

Sadoc's thin, tremulous hand descended silently upon the weapon, clutched it, drew it forth and from its silver sheath. The white moonlight played with it; it shimmered like pale flame. With a muttered curse the old man drove it into Hamet's bosom.

The fierce Moor, with a soldier's instinct, started to his feet. His hand fumbled an instant for his cimeter, he staggered, threw up his arms, and fell back heavily. But life was not extinct, nor was reason gone. He opened his eyes in a little while, and, casting them upon Sadoc, said:

"Thou hast made a widow, Jew! But I cannot blame thee; the blow was for liberty. Yet thou hast been false, O Sadoc, to every principle of honor. Thou wouldst, for gold, have betrayed the son of a king, with whom thou hast eaten salt."

The expiring Hamet paused.

"It pains me most, he added, mournfully, 'that I leave the black-eyed woman and the unprotected babes. But thus I was doomed, O Sadoc! Withdraw the dagger, and let me die. I never feared foe in battle-field, nor will I shrink from this foe, pale and hollow-eyed.'"

"Thou hast been cruel, fierce Moor, and this is thy reward. Thou wilt perish in thy heathen darkness, without one true appeal to the God of Israel."

"I know nothing of thy God, but to Allah I commend my soul!"

Sadoc slowly withdrew the dagger, and the features of Hamet gradually stiffened into the rigidity of death.

Wiping the fatal blade on the Moor's garments, he returned it to its sheath, and concealed it on his own person.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE KING TRIES THE FIDELITY OF AHAB.

The Knight of the Red Cross had not galloped far before he remembered that he had dropped the dagger which he had taken from the King, and calling to Ahab to proceed, went back to the fig-tree to get it. It was easily found, there being a diamond in the hilt, which sparkled like fire as it lay on the ground. He dismounted, secured it, and was swinging himself again into the saddle, when he saw a horseman urging swiftly to the spot. A moment more revealed the outlines of his person; and, with surprise mingled with misgivings, Mornay distinguished El Zagal. He had in his hand two lances, two cimeters by his side, and a full suit of armor fastened at the crupper. He was himself in mail from head to foot; and as he spurred up, made a most knightly and soldier-like appearance.

"I expected to find thee here, Sir Raoul Mornay. I thought it not fitting that so brave a knight should go hence without his armor, his sword, and his tough ashen lance."

"A most welcome gift!" answered Mornay, joyfully. "Generous El Zagal, thou art not to be outdone in deeds of gentle courtesy."

"Valorous knight, I beg thee to dismount and suffer me to act, for once, as thine armorer. I will incase thee in thine own steel right quickly, and with good will."

Sir Raoul never obeyed a request with more alacrity, and the doughty El Zagal, with the gentleness of the most careful page, put him in harness. This done, he held the stirrup while he vaulted to the back of his own black steed, which El Zagal had ridden.

"It is a splendid animal," said the Moor, "and I thought it a pity to part a horse and rider so well matched."

He then tendered Mornay his lance.

"I can well appreciate," replied the latter, "such noble acts as these, and I know not what boon I would deny the cavalier who lays me under such obligations."

"Sayest thou so?" cried El Zagal, springing to the saddle just left empty by the exchange of horses. "There is one favor I would ask!"

The Moorish leader hesitated, and looked wishfully at the knight.

"Speak, in the name of chivalry, and there is nothing but liberty that I will not gladly accord, if it be in my power," answered Sir Raoul, with warmth.

"It is in thy power, and I doubt whether it be in the power of any other knight to grant so great a favor. It is to run one course, and to shiver one lance, for the sake of good fellowship and lady-love."

"If that be thy wish," exclaimed Mornay, with alacrity, "the favor is to me and not to thee. Faith! In this thing thou art doing me the greatest honor of all, and increasing the debt I already owe thee. For the sake, then, of my mistress dear, whose eyes are fairer than the evening-stars, and whose beauty surpasses the imagination of man, I will meet thee as loyal cavalier should meet loyal cavalier."

"So be it, and let there be no hardness between us. It were worth something to have a bullet from the Knight of the Red Cross, and even an overthrow may not be reckoned shame."

With a graceful salute at each other, they wheeled their steeds, and riding a suitable distance for a clear course, turned and spurred to the encounter. The ground shook beneath the bounds of their trained coursers, and the knights met midway with a shock like thunder. Both lances were shattered, but neither horseman swerved from his seat.

Wheeling again, they drew swords, and renewed the conflict with those weapons, to still further test their prowess. For a time there was a sharp ring of steel. Their blades flashed like meteors, but victory determined in favor of neither. They desisted presently, from sheer weariness.

"I am content, Sir Knight!" said El Zagal. "Thou sittest like a rock in the saddle, and thy sword gleams before one's eyes like the flaming dart of Azrael, the Angel of Death. Thou hast canceled such trifling courtesy as I may perchance have done thee. May Allah speed thee on thy way!"

"Valiant El Zagal, I will not fail to report to the brave knights of Spain that I have run a course with the renowned Moslem chief, whose voice and arm are so terrible in battle. If need be, I will break lance in defence of thy honor and courage, and make good thy claims to the title of the best cavalier in Granada!" responded Sir Raoul, with equal enthusiasm. Then with mutual good wishes they parted, Sir Raoul riding after Ahab as fast as his noble Andalusian could carry him.

Meantime, Ahab kept on till he reached the mountains. The King, perceiving that they were alone, thought to play the youth a trick, by throwing himself suddenly from the saddle, believing that if once upon the ground, he would be, even if unarmed, more than a match for him; but no sooner had he attempted this, than to his dismay, he beheld a naked blade thrust from beneath Ahab's left arm, in perilous proximity to his breast. With a muttered imprecation, he was forced to abandon his purpose, and began to test him in another direction.

"Thou art faithful to thy master, youth," he said, dissembling his anger. "Would that I had been fortunate enough to have had thee in my service."

"Like enough, worthy Abaddon," quoth Ahab, condescendingly. "I am worth my weight in gold to him whom I take it into my head to serve."

"Thou hast good recompense, I'll warrant?"

"Your Kingship could put my recompense in your eye, and see none the worse for it. I take not a piastre from my real master, but pick up my living from those whom I feign to serve, but do not. I live by my wits."

"A cunning varlet! Thou mightest serve the devil with credit," said Aben Hassan, in a bland voice, though the youth heard him grinding his teeth together.

"If anything had been written concerning the service you have last named, I think I should have been in thy pay; but it is all the same!"

"Knowest thou the value of diamonds, Ahab? Thou art called Ahab, art thou not?" continued the King, in accents still more pleading.

"I am called Ahab, and I know something of diamonds. There were some splendid ones on the white fingers of Zoroya. I remember they flashed in my eyes, when I knelt to kiss the tips of her fingers."

Ahab spoke with as much ease of kissing the hand of a Sultana as if he had been born and bred the equal of princes.

"Thou kiss her hand? Thou!" retorted Hassan, thrown off his guard by the assurance of the youth.

"The same!" said Ahab. "We servants are obliged to kiss hands, when our betters have a chance at the lips. But there is no odds; it is all one! We can kiss only what is written."

"Wouldst thou deign, incomparable Ahab, to examine this diamond?" The King drew a magnificent ring from his finger and passed it under Ahab's arm.

"I will deign," answered Ahab, graciously accepting the jewel. "Great Abaddon, it is of the first water," he added, touching it to his tongue, then slipping it upon one of his tawny fingers. "It is worth about five thousand pistoles; which makes a very comfortable diamond of it."

"Thy judgment is most accurate; that is its value to a pistole, as estimated by the best lapidary in Granada. Now, this diamond is thine—"

"I thank you for the gift, most munificent magician?" interrupted Ahab, with remarkable adroitness. "And for this grace, you shall ride behind me with as much safety as if you were riding in a chariot and four."

"I was going to say," added Hassan, somewhat disconcerted, "that this glittering gem should be thine, if thou wilt but turn bridle toward Granada, and ride thither as if thou wert racing for life."

"That cannot be. I may not betray my chosen master. But whatever else I can do for you in return for this truly royal ring, shall be done right cheerfully."

"If thou refusest this favor, allow me to push thee from thy seat, and manage the rest of the affair alone."

"I care not to be pushed; therefore this is as impossible as the other. Be content with less."

"Let it be even less, conscientious Ahab. Connive at my casting myself from behind you, and providing for my safety as I best may, on foot."

Hassan's tones grew less and less hopeful.

"It is written, King of Granada, that if you cast yourself upon the ground, I shall cast myself upon you, in which untoward event it might fare hard with you. Yet, for all this, I will keep your gift not a grain the less thankfully, and will examine it more at my leisure when we have reached the stone castle of Sadoc."

The youth heard his prisoner gnashing his teeth with rage, but feigned not to be conscious that anything unfair had taken place.

Most of this conversation transpired while Ahab was waiting for Sir Raoul at the foot of the mountain.

"How noble," he exclaimed, leering over his shoulder, "is the benevolence of kings! With this precious stone converted into pistoles, I will marry Nicolette and set up house-keeping. How mighty pleasant to have a youth of my tender years wearying the ears of Allah every day with prayers for your happiness!"

"No more! I have had enough of thy wit. I may yet have the pleasure of hanging thee! Here comes thy master."

"Shall I show him your princely gift?" asked Ahab, slyly.

"Do what thou wilt; but, in the name of Allah, hold no further speech with me. I had rather be lashed to a dead man than ride behind an imp of thy unblushing effrontery."

Just then the Knight of the Red Cross came riding up, in excellent spirits.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NIGHT OF ADVENTURES.

Sir Raoul and Ahab now pushed forward with their royal captive as fast as the intricacies of the mountain-paths and passes would admit. Aben Hassan said little, submitting in moody silence to his fate. As luck would have it, just before morning they met one of those ten men-at-arms who had accompanied Hamet on his unfortunate expedition. On beholding Sir Raoul, he knew not whether to fly or advance; and, while he hesitated, the party came up with him. His surprise was very evident; and the figure of Hassan, mounted behind Ahab, seemed not the least object of his wonder. He had seen but recently Abaddon, the magician, and also heard

wonderful stories of his occult powers, without distrusting, or having any reason to do so, that he was not what he appeared. Rejoiced to see a face that he knew, he approached the King, exclaiming:

"Good Abaddon, I am glad to meet you. I am but just escaped from the greatest peril, our party of ten having been attacked by more than thirty brigands, who came upon us unawares in the night."

Mornay rode to the side of Aben Hassan, giving him a warning glance, which he understood, but determined to disregard.

"Then your journey to the mountains failed?" queried Hassan.

"I think you may safely come to that conclusion," replied the Moor.

"Hamet was a brave man. Surely, he did not turn his back on the foe, like a coward?" continued the King, eagerly.

"The last I saw of Hamet," answered the Moorish soldier, "he had the Jew beside him, fighting his way through the midst of the banditti toward a narrow pass, through which, no doubt, he intended to effect his escape."

"Faithful Hamet! Had you ten possessed half his nerve, you would never have fled ingloriously. Step hither, friend, and, for the sake of thy royal master, I will bestow upon thee a pistole wherewith to procure food and shelter till you reach the Alhambra."

As the Moor drew near, Hassan plucked off his turban and flowing hair, exclaiming:

"Behold in me the King of Granada, foully ensnared and betrayed, and forced from the Alhambra on pain of instant death! Either draw thy sword and attack this Christian dog like a man and a true follower of the Prophet, or fly with the speed of the wind and tell what thou hast seen and heard."

"By Allah! It is true!" cried the Moor, and sprang away at the top of his speed.

"See that the King escape not!" shouted Mornay; and lightly touching the flanks of his horse with his armed heel, shot after the sturdy runner, who endeavored to baffle pursuit by choosing the most inaccessible paths; now darting up a sharp ascent, now leaping across a chasm, now springing from rock to rock. But the unfortunate soldier miscalculated the powers of the Andalusian horse, which swept like an avalanche, flying over chasm, rock, and crag, with astonishing swiftness and ease; and presently, with a terrific bound, struck by the side of the now affrighted Moor, who fell on his knees and begged for life.

"Arise, Moslem, and attend me. Try not again so desperate a hazard. This sword by my side has sheared off a burlier neck than thine, at a single blow."

Quaking with terror, the Moor made a sign of homage and submission, and returned quietly with his captor.

"What will your godship do with this fellow?" asked Ahab.

"Take him with us; and if he again shows us the sole of his feet, we will stop his running forever."

After this adventure, they went on again, but not so fast as before, being obliged to keep the Moor before them.

"Believest thou, soldier, that Hamet escaped with the miserly Sadoc?" asked the King.

"I have no doubt, your Highness, that he managed to get away; and, as for parting with the Israelite, he would never do it while the breath of life was in him."

"I trust he killed the knave rather than let him escape in the confusion of the attack."

Hassan questioned no more, and the Moslem soldier walked sullenly on.

"God deliver me in future," quoth Ahab, "from the trouble of kings! I had rather carry two sacks of barley than one king." Then to Sir Raoul: "If your godship take the fancy to carry off any more kings, I trust you'll straddle him behind anybody but me!"

While Ahab was making this complaint, he looked up and saw a cavalier, armed at all points, coming directly toward him.

"My noble master," cried Ahab, "prepare that identical iron pot on your head for more batterings and bruising; for yonder comes another horseman, wrapped up in hammered iron, who, of course, will have a bout with you. While you are chopping away at each other, I shall have enough to do to take care of my king and the fellow with heels. But it is all the same! I have the means of

housekeeping on my finger, and if I do not marry Nicolette when I am a little older, it will be because it is not written.

The person who now appeared presented a most formidable aspect, and the heart of Aben Hassan beat with expectation.

"Stand!" cried Mornay. "Come no nearer, on thy peril, till I know thy purpose."

"My purpose," answered the horseman, "is to prove my lady the fairest in the world, and my cause the best! To wage war on the Christian, and to fight for the King and the true faith!"

"Allah ichbar!" exclaimed Aben Hassan, joyfully. "Here is a cavalier after mine own heart. Set upon this Christian hound and make him bite the dust, brave stranger. I am Muley Aben Hassan, King of Granada!"

"Heed not the ravings of this madman," Sir Knight, said Ahab, with admirable self-possession. "He has been afflicted with this ailment a long time, and we cannot, with all we can do, drive it out of his addled pate that he is not veritably the King of Granada. Pray, good Sir, dispatch your business with my master without heeding his follies."

The intolerant and haughty old King was so enraged at this unexpected turn of affairs, that he foamed at the mouth, and laid violent hands on Ahab, which conduct but served to confirm the stranger-horseman in the belief of his madness. He therefore did not notice what he had said, but waited the reply of Sir Raoul, who quietly made answer:

"I am called the Knight of the Red Cross, and owe allegiance to Ferdinand of Spain. As to your lady being the fairest, I am ready to dispute it with the sword, and to maintain that I serve one more beautiful. But I would not make this a good and sufficient cause for combat; it being a matter that can only hold in tournaments and friendly jousts, where gentle knights meet for chivalric sports. Breaking a lance or dulling the edge of a sword cannot make one lady fairer or more ugly than another; and it is more manly to meet on sufficient provocation. I will deal truly and frankly with you, and without the use of those exaggerated and preposterous speeches that characterize a certain class of errant-knights. Business of great importance urges me forward, and I have not a moment to lose. I am a plain-spoken Englishman, more in the habit of doing than talking. To cut short all useless parleying, wilt thou or wilt thou not stand aside and permit me to pass on?"

"I am under a vow, Sir Knight of the Red Cross, to let no one pass me who is not afraid to try the temper of his steel; so put thy lance in rest, and do thy devoir for any cause thou wilt."

"I have no lance," answered Mornay, "having shivered it in an encounter not long ago; but draw thy sword, and I will teach thee better than to take such presumptuous vows."

"The event will show," returned the other, haughtily, sticking his lance in the earth, and drawing his sword.

Sir Raoul, somewhat angered by the interruption and the pertinacity of the Moorish knight, commenced the combat with the fixed intention of humbling him.

The vainglorious stranger soon discovered that he encountered one whose steady eye, firm hand, and adroit swordsmanship rendered him a dangerous foe.

While they were thus engaged, the Moslem soldier, watching an opportunity, again essayed to show a light pair of heels; but Ahab, who had not lost sight of him for an instant, pricked his horse with his dagger, which, with a snort and an angry leap, well nigh anticipated the movement of the Moor, and the youth, bending forward in the saddle, struck a sure blow at the faithless soldier, who fell with a mortal wound in the neck.

"It were a foul shame for my manhood, old as I am," cried Hassan, "to submit to this longer. I will strangle thee, vile cur!" The old King clutched at Ahab's throat with quivering hands, to which his rage had lent temporary strength; but Ahab was too agile to be thus surprised, and, springing upon the horse's neck, turned suddenly, and held before his angry face the dagger wet with the blood of the Moor.

"The devil," muttered Hassan, "helps his own!" and, with a moan of inexpressible abasement, sank back into the saddle, and bowed his head upon his chest.

At that moment Sir Raoul disarmed his antagonist, and sent his sword whirling through the air, to fall among the rocks far below, while his horse, trained to battle, sharing in the excitement of his master, and confident in his might, rushed upon the Moslem knight and crushed his steed to the ground; and courser and rider fell together.

Mornay leaped lightly from the saddle, and, drawing a dagger so thin that it would pass between the joints of armor, and called the dagger of mercy, exclaimed:

"Yield, Sir Knight, rescue or no rescue!"

"I yield!" answered the Moorish knight, sullenly. "Name my ransom, and the sum, in good time, shall be forthcoming."

"Wilt thou keep knightly faith?" asked Mornay.

"I will?" answered the Moor, proudly.

"Then listen! My commands are these: Go to the Alhambra, and every morning, one hour after the muezzin's cry, for three consecutive days, proclaim in a loud voice, in the Court of Lions, on horseback, in full armor, as follows:

"Boabdil, son of Muley Aben Hassan, by the will of Allah and all good Musselmans, is King of Granada!"

"This faithfully performed, thy ransom is paid, and thou art free."

"It shall be done!" answered the Moor, firmly.

Sir Raoul then assisted him to arise and mount, with all courtesy.

The King of Granada groaned, in the bitterness of his heart.

"Do it," he vociferated, shaking his clenched hand at the vanquished knight, "and by the soul of the Prophet, I'll tear thee joint from joint when I return to my own!"

The cavalier, without so much as looking at Hassan, bowed moodily to Mornay, and rode toward Granada.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE STONE CASTLE OF SALOME.

The anxiety of Salome increased hourly with the absence of her father. When a day and a night had passed, she became seriously alarmed for the safety of Boabdil. Her fears being founded on intimate knowledge of her father's cupidity, she was placed in a position truly embarrassing, as she shrank from betraying the weakness of a parent.

Boabdil, since his flight, had found means to communicate with many of the disaffected in the kingdom, and at regular intervals Ali was dispatched to a certain place agreed upon, to deposit messages and take away such papers as might be left. An old ruin had been selected as the most fitting spot for these private and important transactions, and stole from the stone castle on this mission the very morning after the Jew's terrible adventure with Hamet. As luck would have it, the ruin referred to was the identical one in which Sadoc had employed so fatally the poisoned dagger destined by Hassan for himself.

On entering the ruin, the first object that Ali saw was the body of Hamet, stern and swarthy even in death. Turning his eyes from this ghastly spectacle, he beheld Saloc, with his back against a column, sleeping profoundly; for the old man, worn out with fatigue, could no longer resist the claims of nature.

This unexpected presentation deprived Ali, for a little while, of speech and motion; but being a person of sense, he controlled his surprise, visited the secret deposit, secured some letters on his person, then came back and considered the Jew more attentively. The thing, however, that most perplexed him, was the chain riveted to his wrist. Taking hold of the end of it, he gently pulled till the sleeper was awakened.

The Israelite, on feeling himself dragged by the arm, manifested most genuine but ludicrous terror, shaking all over, and crying out at the top of his voice. It was a long time before Ali could quiet him; but by-and-by, being brought to reason, and recognizing the face of Boabdil's servitor, was as extravagant in his joy as in his fear. Finding him unable to walk, Ali set him upon his beast, and walking by his side, conducted him back to his castle, vainly endeavoring to extract from him some account of his adventures. The Jew's only reply was to the effect that he fell into the hands of the despoiler and the man of blood, and had escaped by the interposition of the God he served. His arrival at

the stone chamber was the occasion of universal surprise and conjecture.

His haggard appearance, swollen feet, and the chain on his wrist, were each signally significant of suffering. They had placed him by the fire, and were overwhelming him with questions and attentions, when an arrival yet more extraordinary occurred. First, came Ahab, then followed an old man of flowing locks and venerable appearance, and lastly, Sir Raoul Mornay. The entrance of these parties produced effects quite different on the different persons present.

Boabdil turned deadly pale, and uttered an exclamation of amazement on perceiving the old man.

"This," said Sir Raoul, advancing and pointing to Hassan, "is Abaddon; a famed and remarkable magician, for whom I bespeak your respect."

Boabdil, who was standing nearest to the fictitious Abaddon, looked at him naughtily, without acknowledging the introduction by word or sign. Both Leoline and the Jewess contemplated the demeanor of the prince with wonder. Gradually the pallidness passed from Boabdil's face, and a burning flush succeeded it. Anger, contempt, and unspeakable disdain, shot from his dark and luminous eyes. His jeweled fingers first sought his dagger, then his cimeter, then wandered to his throat. His breathing became hurried and his breast heaved with emotion.

The pretended magician, confronting him, gleamed at him with his cold, fierce, blue eyes, displaying a countenance as stern, hard, and unbending as any of those sculptured on the walls of Sadoc's palace. Sneering hate curled the old King's proud lips.

The princess and Salome perceived that something remarkable was about to be developed.

Sir Raoul did not speak, but stood conveniently near, with hand upon his sword, ready to interpose, if needful.

Boabdil glanced reproachfully at his sister, and said, in a sorrowful voice:

"The English knight has betrayed us!"

"It is false!" exclaimed Leoline, indignantly. "You do him foul injustice!"

Sir Raoul smiled, and a joyous flush lent a momentary glow to his countenance. He did not speak.

"Cruel king and false father," said Boabdil, in thrilling tones, "thou canst lay aside thy murmuring! Remember, most unnatural of parents, our meeting beneath the Vermilion Tower. But for some pity for thy gray hairs, but for some lingering respect for the blood in thy veins, and but for horror of so dire a deed, that hour had been thy last! But the hand of Allah was on me, and I stayed my vengeance. Old man, why comest thou now?" He pointed to Leoline, and added:

"May we not dwell even in the caves and dens of the earth in peace? Must we fly continually before thy face? What evil canst thou wish upon her whose only sin is love and adherence to me? Look upon her! Had ever father a sweeter daughter and a fairer? But I will not attempt to soften a heart like thine, or turn a purpose as fixed and unalterable as life itself. I ask again, why art thou here?"

Muley Aben Hassan cast from him his disguise with haughty scorn. Leoline, enlightened by the words of her brother, now presented a striking figure of astonishment and dread. Salome, throwing her arms about her waist, stayed and supported her agitated person.

"I am here," answered the King, in tones heavy with wrath and hate, "because I am betrayed, and Allah has forsaken me! Behold, apostate boy, the downfall of thy father, and the final humiliation of his ambition. I am lured, decoyed, cheated, and accursed! Go thou and take the kingdom, and fulfill the dreadful predictions of seer and prophet. Woe to Granada! Woe to the Alhambra, for it will fall! And lastly, woe to Muley Aben Hassan!"

The old King covered his convulsed face with his shaking hands, and suffered the inexpressible throes of expiring supremacy and the ineffable regret of departing glory.

Leoline threw herself at his feet, but he coldly repulsed her, even refusing to look at her. Her brother tenderly raised and embraced her, then, placing her hand in Sir Raoul Mornay's, said:

"The day after I am proclaimed King of Granada, thou shalt wed her!"

"Then," answered Mornay, in a voice scarcely audible, "that happy day will be tomorrow; for, ere this hour, thou hast been proclaimed King of Granada at the Alhambra!"

Leoline, affected beyond measure, would have fallen, had not the Knight of the Red Cross prevented her by the timely support of his arm. To spare her burning blushes, Salome, in a friendly manner, interposed.

Just then Hassan's eyes fell on the crouching form of Sadoc, who, with the chain on his wrist, sat on a cushion, near a blazing fire, with soothing appliances upon his wounded feet.

"Ha! ha! old man!" he sneered. "Thou hast escaped the poisoned dagger!"

"But Hamet has not!" retorted the Jew. "You may find him dead not an hour's ride from hence. Wily and heathen king, thou hast not craft enough to cope with Sadoc, the Jew!"

"Miserable Israelite, next time thou essayest to betray the stranger within thy gates for gold, make thy bargain at a distance, and in a safe place; for the traitor is ever held in scorn, even by him who treats with him. Thou hast come off too easily, most cringing, and creeping, and crafty Hebrew! Thou shouldst have tasted the dagger or the rack. Ah, better to have spared a dozen such servile dogs as those, than one faithful Hamet. Alas, my Hamet! Alas, my brave Hamet!"

Sadoc laughed like a raven.

"Have I touched thee there, King? Does it not affect thee that I am a witness of your downfall? Exult not over me, O mine enemy! My sin has been grievous. But I was urged on partly by avarice, and somewhat by paternal tenderness; for I perceived that the heart of my child was in danger of being beguiled by the fugitive prince. I thought to separate them forever by this base betrayal. But I do repent me in sackcloth and in ashes. I do desire that I may sit in lonely places, and eat the bread of bitterness, drink the waters of affliction, and weep over my transgressions."

The voice of the Jew was touchingly mournful.

"I forgive thee, O my father!" cried Salome.

"Here is a scene," mocked Hassan, "for one of those maudlin tragedies that are sometimes enacted by men and women on the mimic stage. Son Boabdil, thou wilt doubtless exalt this tender Jewess to thy throne! Perhaps it will take away thy name of Unlucky! Her worthy father, perchance, has some store of gold with which to commence kinging it over Granada."

"Enough," screamed Sadoc, springing to his wounded feet, "to buy thy throne and thy kingdom! Ay, enough to levy armies and wage a war of extermination against the accursed Moor! Gold!" he repeated, throwing up his arms in wild exultation. "I have heaps of it; more than thou couldst count during the remaining years of thy life, though thou countest night and day. Ha! ha! ha!" Sadoc laughed like a madman. "It is hers, hers!" he shrieked, pointing to Salome. "Dost thou talk of thrones, old man? Not a queen in the world brought ever so rich a dower to her lord as she shall bring to thy son, if he will but accept her!"

"Father! father!" murmured Salome, in a fainting voice.

Boabdil hurried forward and threw himself at her feet.

"I entreat, O Sadoc," he cried, with eloquent earnestness, "this treasure without the other. Give me thy daughter, and thy gift shall make me happier than the crown I am going to the Alhambra to assume."

"Thou hast her! Thou hast her! I give her to thee in the name of the God of Israel. Meddle not with her faith, I charge thee! Were it not that I have good hopes of thy own enlightenment, this thing might not be. But she is such an angel, her life is so pure, her modesty so great, and her wisdom so persuading, that no heresy can long withstand her influence. She loves thee! Ay, she loves thee!"

"Press her not, brother, press her not! Seest thou not that thou art answered in her blushing face? Damsels love not to say Yea," interposed Leoline, raising her brother, and kissing Salome upon both cheeks.

"By the sword of Omar!" muttered Hassan, biting his lips in wrath. "Here is the unmaking and making of kings and queens before my eyes!"

"Thou hast a queen," said Ahab, quietly, "that is not always a queen, especially when she visits prisoned knight, and entreats him to fly from captive thrall, for the sake of pure love."

Sir Raoul then gave Ahab a rebuking glance.

Hassan's face grew of a dark purple.

"Prisoners escape not of themselves great Abaddon," added Ahab, disregarding the warnings of his master, "and racks do not always drag joints asunder when the fair youth, Zegrin, is present."

"Peace, Ahab, peace!" admonished Mornay.

Hassan looked from one to the other, and the mortifying conviction of Zoroya's treachery came upon him with irresistible force. The Jew, detecting the torture he was suffering, gave him a bitter taunt. Instantly Hassan sprang upon him, snatched the poisoned dagger from his breast, the peculiar hilt of which was visible beneath his doublet, and before any one could interfere, plunged it into Sadoc's throat, and was about to turn it against himself, when Sir Raoul caught his arms, and the deadly weapon fell ringing upon the stone floor.

"Die, dog!" hissed Hassan. "That blow is for Hamet!"

Ahab picked up the dagger, cast it into the fire, and said: "It was so written; and it is all the same!"

"Salome," said Sadoc, faintly, when Boabdil had placed him upon a couch, "come hither. Let me gaze upon thy face once more. Thou art like thy mother, whom I shall soon see."

He laid his hand on her head, then casting his eyes upon Hassan with wonderful calmness, said:

"I thank thee, O King, for the blow thou hast struck for Hamet. Life for life is but just. In dying I feel myself a man. My better nature has too long been imprisoned in this shriveled flesh. I see clearly wherein hath been my sin and my blindness. I humble myself before the God of Israel. May Abraham take the persecuted Hebrew to his bosom. Salome, give me thine hand. Where is he who is to be thy lord and husband? I would have also his hand." He paused, and for a moment there was a sound of low sobbing. "Salome, in the casket thou knowest of, thou wilt find, as I have before informed thee, a full inventory of all my treasures, which will soon be thine. It will more than suffice for thee till we meet in heaven. Do not forget the destitute of earth, as I have done. My child, dost thou really and truly forgive me?"

"Most really and most truly!" sobbed Salome.

"Then may the blessing of God forever rest upon thee! Boabdil, where art thou?"

"I am here," answered the prince, with emotion.

"Join hands with my Salome. Swear by the God of the Hebrews and by the Allah of the Moor that thou wilt never leave nor forsake her, that thou wilt cleave unto her as to thine own soul as long as life shall last!"

"I swear!" murmured Boabdil, in a subdued voice.

"So mote it be! I die in peace, in the faith of my fathers!"

Sadoc, the Jew, turned a little upon his side, looked with ineffable tenderness at Salome, and gently expired.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AND THE LAST.

Aben Hassan was confined in one of the stone chambers, and the faithful old Ali made his custodian. Sadoc's castle became at once the scene of unusual action and interest.

"Some trusty cavaliers are needed," said Mornay, an hour after the foregoing scene. "You should take possession of the Alhambra this very night."

"Those trusty cavaliers," answered Boabdil, taking a package from his bosom, "are now on their way to an appointed rendezvous. I have powerful friends who have been working zealously; and I am credibly informed and well assured by these letters, that there is a strong party in my favor at Granada. The popular feeling humors the turn of the tide, and, by the will of Allah, to-morrow-morning I will sit on the throne of my father."

"It is well! I am glad that your Highness

has neglected nothing that can conduce to success; for the hour is most auspicious," said Mornay.

"I am afraid," said Ahab, with his customary familiarity, "that I shall not witness that frightful passage-at-arms that was to take place on your return from the Alhambra, my master. King or otherwise, I would not, were I in your place, let him off; for I have no doubt but a great deal of fine sport might be had in tilting at each other with spears, and that you would make a merry ringing, if it should come to the matter of battle-axes."

"It is not written, I think!" replied Sir Raoul, smiling.

"Then it can never happen; although it appears there hath been a page or two scratched over about your marrying a princess, and returning in great glory to Spain; also, that one Ahab the Witty will stick to your godship while water runs and wood grows; moreover, that another, Nicolette the Pretty, will eventually pair off with this same Ahab the Witty. But it is all the same!"

"Your faithfulness, my good Ahab, exceeds all praise, and I shall be most happy to retain your services, whether here or elsewhere. Of the two, I like your wit better than your heels, although when we first met, I was of a different mind. Whatever good has happened to me of late, you have had a helping hand in; and if Nicolette be not sensible of your merits, none will regret it more than I."

"I think, your godship, though she may not be quite as handsome as the princess, she will do well enough for me. But I am in no hurry. I can wait a year or two, or half a dozen years, at a pinch, and live through it, provided it be not otherwise decreed. You see that a man can no more marry till it is written than he can lift himself by the tops of his boots. Marrying is like death, which cannot happen till the time comes. Yet none of these things disturb me. My love is

of that patient kind that can endure postponements and delays as well as a camel can travel without water on the desert. Sooner or later, the thing will come; and with God's help I will bear it as if I had no more wit than a common Moor."

"Your invaluable servant," observed Boabdil, with a smile, "will never make himself miserable for black eyes; and it will be a stormy day that brings a cloud upon his brow or his heart. I shall not forget that I, also, owe him a debt that never can be canceled and wiped out of our common accounts by either kindness or rewards."

"Your Highness," answered Ahab, bowing, "I have paid myself by appropriating one of the family-jewels, which stands me just five thousand pistoles." He held up the diamond-ring which he had received from Hassan.

"I, too," said Mornay, gratefully, taking the hand of the prince, "have one of the royal jewels, and the most precious and the brightest that ever graced the throne of a monarch; and that jewel is the princess Leoline, whom I have received, this day, from your munificent hand. Boabdil, King of Granada, permit me to be the first to acknowledge your sovereignty, and salute you as a dutiful subject."

The Knight of the Red Cross, before Boabdil could prevent him, dropped gracefully on one knee and kissed his hand.

"Nay," remonstrated the Prince, "this may not be! But here is one approaching, whose hand any knight would be glad to salute. My first command is, that you now pay that homage to my sister."

It was Leoline, who at that moment entered the apartment, to whom Boabdil's first command referred, and never was the mandate of prince obeyed more willingly.

"She may be a jewel of great purity, but not easily converted into pistoles," said Ahab, with speculative eye.

"Never, lady," whispered the Knight of the Red Cross to Leoline, "did I know the full taste of happiness till to-day! Let thy

brother repair to the Alhambra to a throne but I care not for thrones, and crowns in this hour of my bliss are baubles that I could walk over without seeing or coveting. All is arranged. Boabdil this night, with a chosen band, will quietly enter the Alhambra, where he will be received with acclamations and without bloodshed. I rejoice in his great good fortune; but, lady fair, I envy him not. Thou, sweet mistress, fillest every desire, satisfiest every ambition, except the ambition of being worthy of thee."

Leoline, with a charming blush, accepted the proffered arm of Sir Raoul, and they walked together in Sadoc's hall, with murmured words of mutual content, even as they afterward walked through life together.

That night, Boabdil took quiet possession of the Alhambra, and, on the following day, was proclaimed, by proper heralds, King of Granada.

Salome, after the expiration of her days of mourning, accepted him and his fate, and the vast riches left by her father long helped to uphold his throne. He was sometimes called an apostate by factious Musselmans, but whether he was really converted to the faith of his sultana, history furnishes no certain knowledge.

El Zagal became a firm friend and supporter of the new sovereign, and was present at the magnificent bridal of Sir Raoul and Leoline.

Aben Hassan spent the remainder of his days in moody retirement. The anomalous youth, Zegrin, or in plainer words, Zoroya, Boabdil's most dangerous enemy, fled the Alhambra, and whether she shared the changed fortunes of the fallen king, or sought consolation elsewhere, we cannot say.

Sir Raoul Mornay took his beautiful bride to the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, where her wonderful perfections of mind and person were celebrated by poets and minstrels, and made many hearts beat fast under doublet of silver and breastplate of steel.

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